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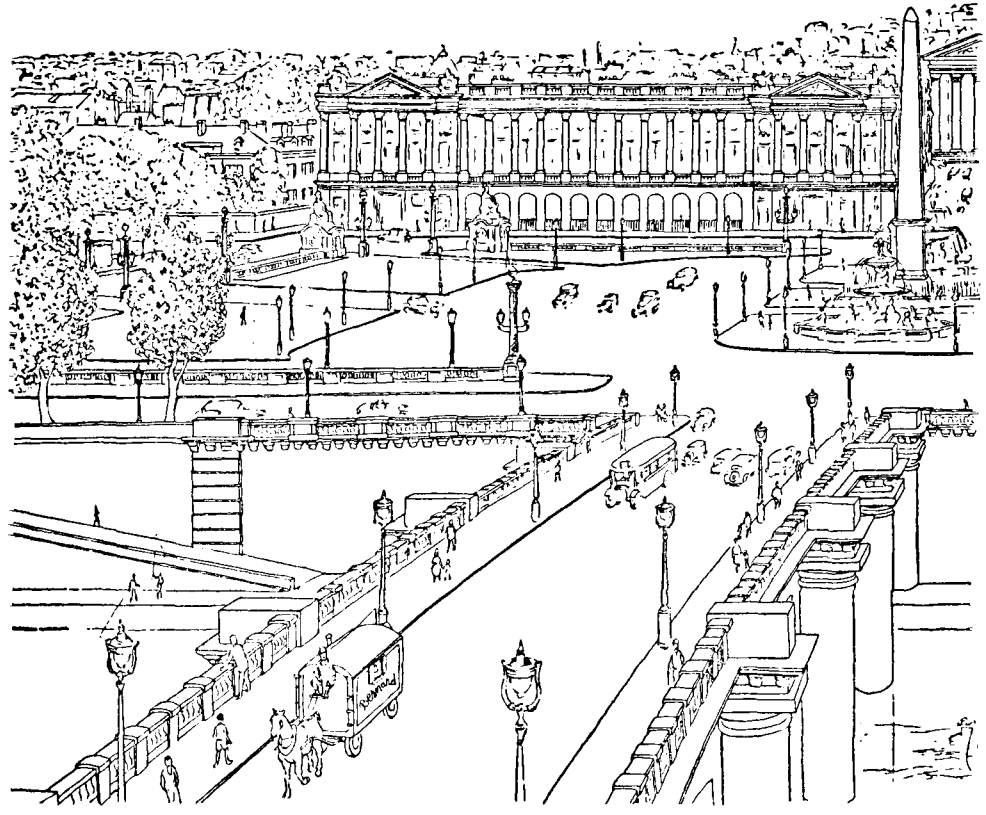

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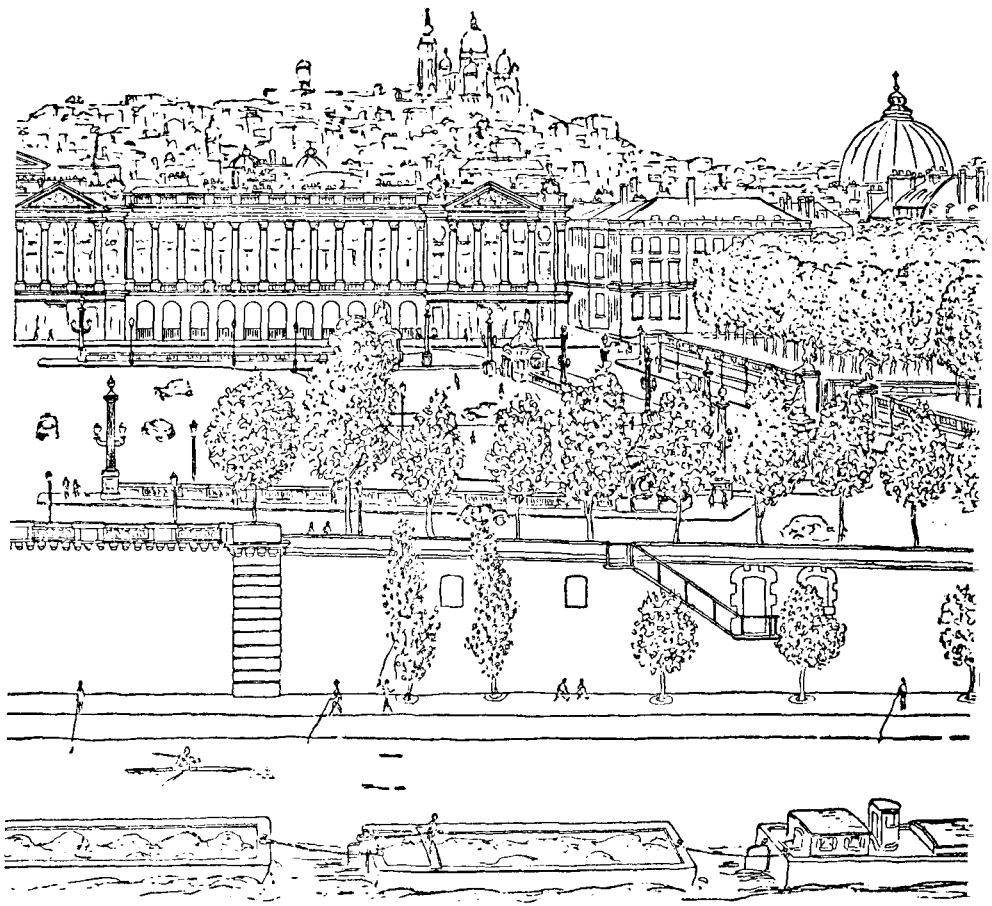

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WILLIAM STYRON

The McCabes

It all came about like this. Poppy, whose religious activity had been intense all through the Lenten season (at times Cass had thought that if she brought one more fish into the house he would throttle her), reached a kind of peak of fervour during Holy Week; unremittingly, she had addressed herself to all sorts of complicated rites and offices, in pouring rain dashing out to see the various Stations—whatever that meant—and it was at one of these, Cass knew not where—at the Church of Santa Maria Maggiore, perhaps, or that other one, with the Giotto fresco, San Giovanni in Laterano—that she encountered an American couple, the McCabes. Purely encountering these two, Cass later thought, might have been all right, and who was at fault in promoting the relationship (it could not have been Poppy, who was usually diffident; and

Drawings by George Thompson

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Cass later had a vision of the ham-handed, fat-lipped McCabe, with his concavity of a Galway nose and a Rolleiflex lolling on his breast, standing among the jostling throng and twitching inwardly as his eyes lit on Poppy's radiant pious face) he never knew for certain. In any case, someone struck up a conversation. All innocence, Poppy cottoned to these pilgrims, and they to her, and she made the grave mistake of bringing them home. It was late in the afternoon when they arrived; molecules of rain floated on the air in a greasy drizzle; it was gray, and Cass, gray as a shad himself, had been brooding all day upon their now shaky financial state. McCabe, a raffish fellow of thirty-five or so in a mackintosh and a snapbrim cap, was full of grins. He dealt (bitter irony!) in retail wines and liquors in Mineola, New York; he referred to Poppy as "this sweetie here," and he called Cass "pal." His wife, who wore her hair in bangs over—or to conceal—a somewhat foreshortened brow, was a plain, nondescript, asexual young matron, and her name was Grace. Cass scarcely could believe that it was all happening to him.

"What in Christ's name has come over you?" he said to Poppy as softly as he could, in the kitchen, while she was fixing supper. "You invited them to *eat* even!"

"Well, I'm sorry, Cass," she said determinedly. "They were very sweet to me and all. They bought me some gelato and everything. And they looked so lonely and kind of lost there, after we got to talking. They're sweet. Besides," she added, with a look of sorrow, turning around to face him, "we don't ever see any Americans—ever!—and I'm just tired of it, that's all!"

Which the Lord knew was true enough, Cass thought ruefully (for Poppy's sake), he himself having retreated so far from contact with his native land that in his years abroad he could count on his fingers and toes the sum of the words he had spoken, beyond his family, in his own tongue to his own compatriots. Yet this fact alone he could not square with the desolating McCabes.

"You didn't have to drag in a couple of *Micks*, for the love of God! From Mineola yet—"

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"Hush about being a Mick!" she said, eggbeater quivering in her hand. "I'm a Mick, and the children are *half*, and you're just about the biggest bigot I know. I've—"

"Why didn't you invite a couple of plumbers, and a half dozen Odd Fellows—"

"I've invited them, now shut up!"

At supper, which was merluzzo—a form of oily codfish—and spaghetti, McCabe, blind to the litter of paint and canvas strewn about the room, asked Cass what his "line" was. When told, he grimaced, grinned, but said nothing. In the Eternal City even the Pharisee cannot be unkind to art. The conversation swung, as it logically should, to the spiritual aspects of the season.

"Father Cleary," said Grace, "you know we came over with him, well he said that the Holy Father would probably be canonized some day. That's what the rumor is, anyway."

"You know how rumors are," said Cass, plucking a fishbone from his mouth. "You know how they get around. Scuttlebutt. Sound and fury, signifying niente."

There was a moment of silence, a suggestion, almost audible, of forks and knives in mid-air, suspended. Then as Cass raised his eyes, Grace said, with only the faintest touch of asperity: "On the way over your wife told us—well, that you weren't a Catholic."

"You're goddam right I'm not a goddam Catholic." The sentence rose in the back of his throat, pulsating, surly; he could almost see it, inverted commas and all, but the words stopped short of his lips. "That's right," he rumbled instead. "Never got the bug."

Seething, he managed to get through the meal, picking his teeth and rising for restless tours to the bathroom and then, drifting on the tide of his own thoughts, idly sketching on the tablecloth doodles with a spoon as the puerile chatter unspiraled—about the Pope, whom the McCabes hoped to see sometime, at an "oddience," and Cardinal Spellman, who was not nearly so fat—"large" was the word Grace used—as his pictures made out. Poppy, deeply impressed by this news, was nonetheless one up on the McCabes, for she had had,

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already, an audience with the Pope ("up real close") and she had a moment of modest glory when, at Grace's breathless urging, she was able to describe the Holy Father—his hands, the cut of his nose, the size of his ring, or rings; "a fine glorious man, to be sure," she said, shiny-eyed, lapsing into her ancestral brogue.

"Pardon me," Cass put in abruptly. Something had jogged his memory; it had tickled him before and it tickled him now. "You know what," he said, already laughing, "you know what the cardinals in the Vatican call Spellman?"

"No, what?" said Grace. "*Cardinal* Spellman."

"Guess."

"I really couldn't guess," she said with a hopeful look.

"Shir—" He had begun to laugh so hard that he could barely get the words out. "Shir—" Convulsed, he pressed his head against his hands, weakly heaving. "Shir—Oh Christ. Shirley Temple!"

"Cass!" Poppy cried.

"No, I mean it!" he giggled, gazing into Grace's scandalized face. "He comes winging in from the U.S.A., by this Super Constellation, see—"

"Cass!" said Poppy.

"No, I mean it! I was told this by a *priest*, mind you. In he comes to Ciampino, and the news gets around the Vatican that *Shirley Temple ha arrivata!* Don't that break your—"

"Cass!"

"Haw haw haw!" Gusts of laughter exploded forth from the table, startling Cass, who looked up to see McCabe, mouth wide open like his own, shaking in helpless mirth. "That's rich, pal!" he said, wiping his eyes. "Shirley Temple, that's the most! You hear that, Grace?" He could hardly wait, he added between wheezes, to tell Bill Hurley that one.

"I don't think it's funny at all," said Grace sharply.

It was at that moment, Cass recalled later, that the evening took a vigorous turn for the better; to be sure, when all was said and done the change was illusory, lulling him, leading him into a trap, and engaging him in a tangle of emotional crises which he was not to shake off for a long time. At that

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moment, though (who knows what might be the repercussions of a single hairy joke?) he felt full of himself, transformed by McCabe's surprising, appreciative laughter from a sour introvert into an amiable jester. As for McCabe himself, who still sat across the table shaking his head and letting out loose wails of merriment, he basked for Cass in a new and more kindly light. That he was simple-minded and an ass was one thing; that in the face of his wife's ambitious and tedious piety he could laugh gave him, in some odd and obscure way, more solid dimensions. Cass felt himself actually warming a little toward the man, "pal" and all.

"No, I'll be confidential with you, see?" McCabe said after dinner, when Poppy and Grace were washing the dishes. "I'm a good Catholic and all that, but I'm not *thick* about it, see? Now Rome is great, I'll tell you, but me and Grace have just come for two different reasons." And, describing the curve of phantom breast or buttock with his hand, he said with a long vaudeville wink: "Know what I mean, pal?"

"I sure do, Mac," said Cass benevolently.

The fatal moment had arrived. The transmogrified Mineola Eve, proffering forbidden fruit. "Say," he said in a hoarse whisper. "You look like it's been a long time since you had the real American article. How about some Old McCabe?"

He was not joking, and Old McCabe was no fiction: it was one hundred proof sour mash Bourbon whiskey, bottled in Tennessee and sold in Mineola under McCabe's own picturesque label (shamrocks, harp, Hibernian pipe), and he had a quart full of it in the sagging pocket of his mackintosh. Cass heard a groan, mingled in equal parts of joy and despondency, escape his lips as McCabe held the bottle, flashing amber, up to the light; he groaned and he fidgeted and he sweated and finally he said, in tones of purest affliction: "Well, Mac, I haven't had any of that stuff since I left the States, and I'd like to. But I can't."

"Watsa matter? It's the real article, pal. I never travel without it."

"I can't handle the booze," he said simply. "It takes me. It gives me problems. I stick to a little wine. If you want to

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know the truth, I'm a whiskey-head. Also, Mac, I got an ulcer."

He might have known better than to temporize thus: within an hour, during this, the cruelest night of his recent reckoning, he was on his way to becoming the drunkest man in Rome. And why? Why? Why on this night, under these particular circumstances, with this foolish and irksome stranger? Why, after so long a struggle to keep his balance, should he go off now, on a dull drab night in Rome which demanded the stuff neither for celebration or mourning? Why, he kept asking himself, as in despair and in rapid succession he downed three half-tumblers full, straight, was he such a weak-kneed slob, unless he had simply been set down in a situation over which he had utterly no control? Suddenly (this was when McCabe, moist-mouthed and stripped to his red, white, and blue suspenders, had begun a series of gamey Irish jokes, full of Pats and Mikes and begorras) he began to wonder if this storekeeper were not really a sort of bizarre *advocatus diaboli*, sent not merely to test but to prove, through the irresistible sour mash, his inability to survive in the world of his own will. Mother of God, he thought as with mumbling lips he downed his third glass, I'm slipping again. But Old McCabe was, in truth, the real article: Cass began to glow inwardly and outwardly and all around; he abandoned himself to the jokes, heehawing with mouth wide open and, like the meanest smoking car poltroon, slapping his haunches, rooting at his crotch, and telling McCabe a few of his own. When "the girls" returned from the kitchen, half an hour later, his face was aflame, he had torn off his tie, he was awash in sweat, and he was prancing the room like a billygoat.

"So this Irishman was on the train," he was saying ,"next to this little Middle Europe Jew who couldn't read English and kept asking him to translate from the newspaper. So this Irishman said to himself, 'I'll play a joke on this little guy.'— You know this one?"

"Cass Kinsolving!" He heard behind him Poppy's cry of distress. "Oh Cass, you've started all over *again!*"

"Hush, Poppy! I'm telling a story!"

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"But *Cass*—"

"So everytime the Jew would ask 'What's this?' the Irishman would say something like 'Syphillis' or 'Gonorrhea' or—"

"Cass! You listen to me!"

"So finally the Jew said, 'What's this mean? This word right here,' and the Irishman said, 'That means the clap.' So the Jew just shook his head slowly back and forth and said, 'Oy! Is that Pope a *sick* man!'"

"*Haw haw haw!*" McCabe roared, rolling back on the couch. "Haw haw haw haw haw!"

Limp himself with mirth, free now of despair, regrets, recriminations, he wheeled about to face Poppy's unhappiness: "You said you *wouldn't* anymore!"

"I was kidding," he said, beaming, throwing an arm around her. "Forgot what fun it was."

She jerked away from him. For a moment her mouth parted, trembling on speech. Then, as if cancelling whatever it had been in her mind to say (God love her, he thought in a dreamy haze, she has never once nagged me in her life), she cast McCabe a ruinous look, turned silently about and left the room, either unwilling or unable to see him once more embrace his demon. She slammed the bedroom door.

Then strange things happened. Grace, still prim and aloof for awhile, slowly dropped her guard and prompted by her husband's loud and deprecating wisecracks ("Come on Gracie, don't be a drag, so it's Lent, you haven't swore off the Old McCabe."), sampled some of the product; finding it as good as ever, she soon became well lubricated, loose of tongue and hair-do, and by midnight, just before their game of three-handed blackjack began, she had abandoned all airs and religiosity, hinting with a snicker that she might also have come to Rome "to pick up a couple of alligator bags," and letting slip several hells and goddams. Cass should have known better than to gamble when drunk (especially, it gradually dawned on him, with someone like McCabe who, holding his liquor like a grenadier, quickly dropped all pretense at conviviality and settled down to the game with

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falcon eye and stony hand), but when McCabe had said, "How's about a little cards?" it had been in the nature of a clarion and resistless cry: of all his memories of the war, poker was the one remaining which had a shred of decency, of charm. He was—at least he had been in the past—an expert. Indeed, a virtuoso. It had even brought him, in his Marine Corps outfit, a kind of middling fame. Money in those days, accumulated pay, meant nothing. On half a dozen Pacific islands, in hotel rooms in Hawaii, on Stateside bivouacs, and in the steaming holds of Navy transports he had won and lost what would have been, for him, a prodigal fortune at any time; once in a three-day game in New Zealand he had won sixteen thousand dollars, only to lose all of it within a week in a luckless and inferior game of craps. Once he had won over four thousand dollars in a single hand, by the skin of his teeth, to be sure—on an inside straight touched by the hand of the Almighty. And once, in the psychiatric ward of the Naval Hospital in San Francisco, playing with an accredited schizophrenic, two constitutional psychopathic inferiors, and a D.U. (Diagnosis Undetermined) like himself, he had won twenty-eight million dollars, and a sense of triumph that was not diminished by the quixotic nature of the stakes. He loved the cards, he had not played—though he always lugged with him cards and chips wherever he went—since he had been in Europe, and he fell to with passion (God knew they needed the money) and with the illusion that he would clean out the dreary McCabes—which was a mistake. If the Old McCabe had been the proscribed apple, it was the game of blackjack through which he found himself expelled from the garden.

Tense and quiet, the brief camaraderie gone, the three of them played through the early hours of the morning; groggily, hazily, almost hypnotically, he watched the whiskey in the bottle (he alone now drinking) fall to the midpoint level, then lower, shook his head from time to time to keep his swiftly blurring mind in focus, and wondered why he seemed to be losing in such a headlong rush. It was his own reckless fault, he thought, for setting so high the limit of the bets—three hundred lire, or roughly fifty cents: even so

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drunk or not, or simply rusty, he had had too good a set of cards—nineteens, twenties all along—to have lost by one o'clock nearly all of his available cash. By one-thirty he was out of pocket eighteen thousand lire (price of a stunning three-volume Da Vinci set he had had his heart set on, and exactly the pricetag on a bicycle which Peggy had for so long been coveting) and he was forced to go to the kitchen, to rummage around in the dark and pluck ten thousand more from the tea can which served as Poppy's household exchequer. Bleeding God, he thought as he stumbled back through the shadows, I'm acting like a bum in the flicks; we just don't have this kind of cash to throw away. Sitting down heavily, he glanced squint-eyed at the McCabes. Rapt in stony concentration, cigarettes dangling from their mouths, cold sober, and silent save for the brisk, peremptory way they each muttered "Hit" or "Stick," in the tones of ones who had played cards for profit all their lives, they had lost all aspect of the devout pilgrims they had first pretended to be, transformed like twin Cinderellas by the alchemy of midnight into avid, consecrated, hungry sharks. And for the life of him, Cass could not get a blackjack, that fortunate marriage of ace and face-card which would make McCabe relinquish the deal. They gave him the willies, these two dough-faced Micks; he felt ganged-up on, and he saw the ten thousand lire begin to vanish like water poured down a drain. He beat McCabe three times running; he thought his luck was changing. The deal passed from McCabe to Grace; Cass lost again, with a consecutiveness of ill-luck that made him writhe inside and caused the sweat to pop out in droplets on his face. Then he got the deal on his first and only blackjack: the deal lasted two hands, on both of which he lost, and reverted once more to McCabe.

"Mothera God!" he cried out in disgust, as for the fifteenth time his ace and nine—a solid twenty—were beaten by McCabe's twenty-one. "You don't need no Pope, Mac. You got the goddamndest luck I ever saw." He was down once more to a dollar's worth of lire.

"I know what you mean, pal," said McCabe, in his longest

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speech of the game. "That's the way the breaks run sometime, Gimme a match, will you, Gracie?"

By then it was past two o'clock. Although he was still functioning after a fashion—functioning in the realm of the game, at least, taking no rash chances, cautious when caution was called for, forcing his luck, such as it was, only to the most barely tolerable limit—the whiskey, he knew had begun to work upon his mind a most un-subtle demolition. He felt hemmed-in, depressed, claustrophobic. The room had suffered a slight and secret yet nonetheless weird and unnerving displacement of dimension: smaller now, wreathed in clouds of smoke, it seemed almost to have become tilted a bit—somehow with a premonition of menace—like the cabin of a ship at sea moving slantwise in the troubled yet still noiseless waters that presage a violent storm. His head was giddy (it had just been so *long*, he kept thinking) and an uncomfortable nausea had begun to fulminate in the pit of his stomach, and from the high pitch of his early delight he had been brought down—by his tragic losses, by a surfeit of booze, maybe both—to the clammiest sort of anxiety and depression. And it was symptomatic of the deep-dyed lush he was, he thought even while ritualistically he groped for the bottle, that he should assume that a whole lot more of the Old McCabe could ease all of these problems.

"Have another," he heard himself saying thickly to Grace, holding out the bottle, which was (inconceivably!) only a third full. "How 'bout some more the Ole Mac here?"

Whatever slight inebriety had loosened her up before had fled from her, in spirit and in countenance. Her face was as cold-looking as a clamshell. "Me and Mac don't believe in

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mixing liquor and the cards," she said austerely, shuffling the deck like a prestidigitator.

Intolerance, of the sort Cass bore toward Catholics in general and the Irish in particular, breeds brooding; brooding breeds suspicion; and suspicion, in this case mingled with financial loss and an out-of-hand drunkenness, breeds an outraged, adventurous, and unappeasable conviction. The conviction being that night, as he stood in the dark once more groping for lire in Poppy's tea can treasury, that between the two of them the McCabes of Mineola comprised a crooked house. In the darkness he felt his brain lurch like a seesaw; pinpoints of ruby-red fire dotted his vision, and he swayed topheavy against the sink, cracking his elbow. He withdrew from the can a fistful of lire—greasy, shredded, of all denominations; as he did so, it occurred to him, in a kind of explosive and vindictive flash, in an access of imagination or fantasy so intense that it was truer than truth, that McCabe, the miserable son of a bitch, had been bottom-dealing from the deck throughout the entire game. Thrice-punctured Christ! he thought. He had been trusting, stupid, and as blind as a bat. Pilgrims your ass! They were two miserable, lowbrow suburban sharpers, and they had tried to take him for the sucker that he deserved, but at this point, by God, refused to be. Pros they were, an old-time Mississippi twosome, crooks in pietists' clothes who had lushed him up, fattened him for the kill, and plucked him clean as a pullet. A tremendous belch tore itself from his gorge, reverberating around the black kitchen. He felt a damp and queasy sensation in his palm, and drew back his hand from the place where he had propped it, unfeeling, in a plate of cold spaghetti. He began to tremble in total, towering, Protestant wrath. And though his wrath was a moral one, it was also the wholly uncomplicated one at having been taken by these sharp punks, who should have assumed that he—disciplined through a thousand deadly games (for *stakes*, not for peanuts) to sniff out the slightest funny-business or skulduggery—was too dumb to detect a simple bottom-deal, and would be blind to what (and of this he was sure!) had been

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going on all along—revealed by the flash of McCabe's somewhat pudgy knuckle—middle finger, left hand—as he performed his slippery fraud. Well, we'll see about that! he thought. And with the remains of Poppy's money—food, wine, and fuel for at least three weeks—he lumbered grim as Armageddon back into the living-room, lurched into his chair, and said: "Deal!"

"What'd you say?" said McCabe.

"Deal! And *bury* and *burn* those goddam cards, this time."

"Don't get touchy, pal. We all have bad nights every—"

"Deal, I said. Up the limit."

"*What?*" said McCabe incredulously.

"Up the limit! One thousand lire."

"Well it suits me if it suits you."

Cass watched him narrowly, or as narrowly as he could with his inflamed, wayward, by now nearly antipodean eyes. McCabe was not a frail man by any means: he had chunky, solid shoulders and beefy hands and there was a sort of flinty Celtic meanness in his face that indicated he might be capable of a decent scrap. Yet Cass, unworried, even eager, knew he could be handled. Boiling now, and itching, Cass watched him as he dealt the cards—to him first, then to Grace, then to himself. There was no revelatory flicker of knuckle-skin beneath the deck; Cass made a clucking sound, aloud, beneath his tongue: the bastard was playing it cool, he thought, perhaps he even knew that *someone* had pegged him for the crook he was. Cass had three thousand lire riding on a five and a six, showing, and a seven in the hole—a restful eighteen. "Good," he said. Grace stuck. McCabe turned up his cards, said, "Pay twenty," and took the pot.

"Baby you're hot as a firecracker," said Grace, in a marvelling voice. To be both crooked and lucky was just too much. As McCabe dealt again, Cass took the bottle in both hands, somewhat like a baby, and downed in raw flaming gulps what was left of the whiskey to its palest dregs: perhaps to forestall what happened then and what seemed "forever after," he should have made a libation to the gods of Rome; perhaps not even the gods can hinder a greased slide down

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toward disaster; either way, as he felt his brain reel and rock with instant concussion and, still gasping like a fish, caught what was—or what seemed to be— a cheating finger flashing white across the moist ruin of his vision, he knew with despair that he was gone again for good. "McCabe!" he roared. "You bottom-dealing swine!" And it took him no more than two brief seconds to fling off his glasses, heave the bottle over his shoulder and, like a man swimming frantic strokes underwater, to flounder across the collapsing and wildly splintering card-table, amid cards and chips and clouds of floating paper money, where he fell with outstretched, encircling hands upon the horrified McCabe.

Little else—try as he might—could he ever remember. He had begun to black out—the phrase used in alcoholic circles—only seconds before he attacked McCabe, so that all that happened afterwards receded by degrees ever more dimly yet certainly into oblivion. He remembered Grace's screams, unbelievable sounds—earsplitting, cataclysmic —the voice of a woman in quadruple childbirth or in the throes of rape—high-pitched, relentless, and everlasting. He remembered McCabe's front tooth splitting his own knuckle, painlessly, as he landed a lucky blow in a fight where all else seemed to be roundhouse swings, aimless staggerings, sightless and punch-drunk wrath. He remembered McCabe's hairy fist as it connected with his eye, blinding him. He remembered more of Grace's screams. At some point he remembered Poppy and the children, screaming too, and the tenants above and below all screaming—*Zitti! Taci! Basta!*—and the taste of blood in his mouth. He remembered getting a strong fingernail-splitting grip on McCabe's pants, finally, and hurling him out into the night. He rememberd retrieving his glasses and stuffing his pockets with lire—his own and McCabe's—and staggering away from the place. And that was all.

When finally he came to, he knew neither where he was nor how he had gotten there nor the hour of the day or night. He was in a shuttered, silent room, dark as Hades; his head ached and throbbed like a monstrous boil, as did his hand and his half-closed eye, and he was lying naked on a bed. For

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long perplexing minutes he grappled with the question of how he came there, and when, and why; there was a terrifying instant when he could not recall his own name. The terror passed. The hell with it. All identity had fled him and he lay there quietly breathing—pulsing, rather like some low amoebic form of marine life—without fear or anxiety or sensation of any kind, save for pain, which he tried to exorcise through a vain attempt at going back to sleep. After a time, by the slowest of stages, he regained his bearings; memory and reality came slipping back, as did his name, which he spelled out slowly to himself—K-I-N-S—with a sense of charm and discovery, like a young lover. Then a cold crazy panic seized him and he shot out of bed, padding clumsily about on icy tiles until he found a light switch, turned it on, and, in a full-length mirror stood revealed as naked as Adam, one-eyed, bruised, hair upended like a Hottentot's, standing half-frozen in a hotel room so foul and sleazy that it would have shamed a Panama brothel. An antiseptic smell floated on the air. Dirt in great sausage-shaped cylinders festooned the mouldings of the walls, the rungs of two rickety chairs, the edges of a tattered rug. Of furniture, beyond the bed and chairs, there was none; of plumbing there was a plugged-up bidet, gorged with some unspeakable liquid that gulped softly and stagnantly. As for decoration there was only the omnipresent Virgin, gazing down on the grizzly sagging bed where, amnesically and with the collaboration of God knew whom, he had added his chapter to its dateless chronicle of fornication. Whoever she was (and try as he might with his bursting head to recall her, he could not; he may as well have gone to bed with a wraith) she had been thorough: not only had she taken all his money, down to the most frayed and crumbling five-lire note, but she had managed to make off with all of his clothes. Even his underwear was gone. No—charitable whore!—she had left him his glasses; these he found on the floor near the bed, along with his beret, which, being dilapidated, he supposed she couldn't pawn, like the glasses. He put the glasses on, and the beret, and gazed at himself in the mirror: noble animal.

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His pelvic bones ached from the sinister, Lethean romp; looking down, catching sight of something that moved, he saw that she had left him, too, what appeared to be all the vermin in Rome—if that in truth was where he was. Murder! he thought. Murder! Triple bloody murder!

So he had no money, no clothes; recalling the night before (if it really were only the night before), he had no doubt that he was being hunted by the police, by the Pope, by the right honorable lady ambassador Mrs. Luce herself. He had a case of crabs. He was certain his finger was broken. He was on the verge of catching pneumonia in an unheated hotel room in a remote part of Italy (at least he was sure it was Italy) whose location he did not know. He had had, indeed, the debauch he had so long pined for—and one must pay—but did he really deserve this disheveled ending? His plight, in its quality of helplessness and exposure, seemed the closest possible approach in reality to that universal nightmare where one passes in nude parade down the crowded main street of some city—vulnerable, all divulged, without a fig leaf, without anything. There was only one thing to do, at least at that moment, and he did it: he crawled back into the lascivious bed and lay there, bereted, bespectacled, fiercely scratching, pondering a way out of his low condition.

Then who was it that called him? And from whence did it come, that rapturous voice? Was it only some place in his mind's imagining—some island or magic coast never seen on earth—or was it in all truth a land, previsioned, real, where he knew that some fine day he'd set down his lover's triumphant feet? He put up a hand to his aching brow, feeling sweat there now, and fever. Water! he thought. Water! Somewhere in the depths of the building a door slammed hugely, an explosion that brought forth from the woodwork a tribe of affrighted bugs; drowsily watching them shuttle about in the blinding light, he fell once more, terrifyingly, into sleep, dropping not into the oblivion he had so gluttonously yearned for but dreaming of that old abominable seascape upon which, floating helpless as a twig, he found himself eternally undone and foundering. Here, so familiar,

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was the black gulf, the solitary unpeopled coast rimmed round by palm trees, by the weathered slopes of volcanoes which from horizon to horizon sent plumes of smoke into a sickly overcast sky, devoid of sunlight, troubled by premonitions of thunder. Here on this gulf, in a tiny boat so frail that each black foamy wave threatened to swamp it, he was rowing with confused, exhausting strokes toward an island far out to sea where amid whirling carrousels and orangeblossoms and the black eyes of girls there existed a slumbrous southern repose so sweet, so voluptuous, so soothing to his flayed and bedeviled senses that not to reach it would mean his ruin and his end. And from somewhere in the depths of this green vision one single girl's voice called to him in a strange language filled with soft liquid syllables, remote, importunate, and ripe with the promise of love. Love me! she cried, in those words he could not fathom. Love me, and I shall be all salvation. Yet now as he stroked on the heavy oars he seemed to be carried far and away from the voice, borne even more perilously toward the land; huge currents and riptides washed him toward the barren inhospitable shore: a storm blew up, the gulf became as black as night, and upon the horizon there sprang to life a forest of whirling waterspouts, bearing down upon him as darkly as vengeful tornadoes from the western plains. Like the uplifted forms of serpents the seaborne tornadoes came on, plundering his spirit, leaving him bereft of all save a knowledge of utter desertion and terror. The waves beat against him, black and cold, and with the waves came an explosion of torrential rain. In cataclysm, the great range of volcanoes erupted fire; the marvelous green coast or island, the enchanted land unseen at his back, perishing with its freight of unborn and untasted love, toppled into the sea with a hissing noise—"*Non c'è Dio!*" he heard himself shriek—as at last one black and mountainous wave, washed to this gulf as if from the uttermost boundaries of the earth, bore him up and up through a sky snowy with the falling bodies of gulls, and descending now, onto the wretched and irremediable shore...

"Non c'e Dio!" he found himself sobbing, lying out-

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stretched on the floor. "He is dead! He is dead!" And even as he awoke on the wet tiles the contracting, seashore rhythm of the dream still lingered, and he was again wafted in one long last dwindling shiver of memory, screaming, to his mean worthless extermination. Light had filtered through the shutters; still he could not tell whether it was dawn or dusk.

Poppy came and got him, bearing a carboard box full of clothes. He had mustered enough strength to bang on the door and yell, summoning a limping, evil-looking porter, whom he bribed with the promises of fortune to make the telephone call. The man also brought him a bottle full of water, which he downed at a gulp. Distraught and red-eyed as she was, Poppy was relieved to see him and—as always—was forgiving. In wrenching guilt over what he knew he had really done, he told her how—in a bar on the Piazza Mazzini—he had fallen in with bad company: two fuzzy-headed Somaliland Negroes who could scarcely speak Italian and who, dropping some tribal potion into his Strega, had rolled him for his money and his clothes. This Poppy believed implicitly, which aggravated his guilt. Bouncing homeward in a taxi through the morning light, he lay with his head in Poppy's lap, suffering and suffering, and muttering recriminations. From her he discovered that the hotel had been on a miserable slum street far out off the Via Appia Nuova—barely in Rome at all—and that he had spent a full day and a full night in the place. It was Good Friday, with a salmon-streaked and radiant sky, touched with sorrow and hope, and the bells were silent all over Rome.

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HONESTY

Lunaria annua

Who would think it ever—
lasting? Patent, it seems to be nothing
but what it is: one of the summering
crowd who live intensely for a day.
Common as a weed
it scatters seed,
spreads and multiplies; it is gay,

it persists like poor
relations, assertive in a royal
color. The clusters, racemose, stand tall:
a simple flower of simple form and fragrance.
One might expect a grace-
full efface-
ment, a yielding insouciance

to the holocaust of fall.
But when the smouldering garden lies ashy
in death, erect, the bones of Honesty,
shed of flesh and flower, winter-pure,
assume immortal state
and epithet:
lunaria, moon-wort, satin flower,

mother-of-pearl; the fruit
perpetual, an oval disc, a shield,
spiked, semi-pellucid, lustrous. Shelled
of its outer valves it is an eye
of silk, a keen tensile
orb; the rustle
dry, enduring, as reliquiae.

—BETH SINGER BENTLEY

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TRIPTYCH

I was apprenticed young,
  A shut-in with no sense
Of sunlight or clear sky
  Or the world's experience.

I practiced the devices
  That clever scholars use
To fabricate a garment
  For the sacred Muse.

So all day long I wove
  A pretty metaphor,
Till one night in a dream,
  Through a half open door,

I fancied that I saw
  A stately woman come,
Whose daring and whose grace
  Dazzled my little room.

Oh, life is not the same,
  It pains me to confess,
Since I have known the Muse
  In fear and nakedness.

II

I must now say good-by
As my Muse thinks best
To the worst pig sty
In the whole Midwest

Where youth's lofty vision
Blows off its top
And God's right reason
Goes for hog-slop

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To the academic sow
That my old friends follow
Good-by now
Sunk in the wallow

Good-by to my youth
To childhood's star
To the full-dressed truth
I have come this far

By courtesy and luck
And long apprenticeship
So why should I suck
At an old sow's teat?

III

Of your great store
Grant me this one
Request before
My song is done;

I ask it for
My infant son,
Saint Metaphor,
O sacred Pun:

That by your kind
And winning grace
He shall be heard;

That he may find
In the right place
The right word.

—DONALD PETERSON

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Here at least there was nothing to
quality memory, for it was all exactly as I remembered it. I had
stepped back into Clea's room as one might step back into
a favourite picture. The crowded bookshelves and the heavy
drawing boards, the tiny cottage piano, the cluttered candlesticks
desk with its papers in disorder. Against the wall a bundle
of canvases with sharing their backs. I went and turned a few
round. "My God you've gone abstract!"

"I know. Balthazar hates them! I expect it is
just a phase I am going through. It's a different way of
modelling one's feelings about things. Do you hate them?"

"No. They're stronger than the last I saw."

"Hum. Candlelight is flattering them with false
Chiaroscuro."

"Perhaps."

"Come, sit down and drink."

As if by common consent we
sat facing each other on the carpet as we had so often
done in the past, cross legged like "Armenian tailors"
as she once said; to drink our nightcap by the rosy
light of the candles which [redacted] stood unwinking in
the dark air. Next thing we at last embraced with
momentous
— how shall one say — a calm, the reward of
with silence, as if the urge of language had silently overflowed
into these eloquent kisses which annealed the
heart. They were not aberrant, but like soft clear
forms of a novel innocence

Manuscript page from Durrell's Clea

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D. Rasmusson

THE ART OF FICTION XXIII

LAWRENCE DURRELL

The interview took place at Durrell's home in the Midi. It is a peasant cottage with four rooms to which he has added a bathroom and a lavatory. He writes in a room without windows, with notices of his work in foreign languages he cannot understand pinned to the bookcase. The sitting-room, where the interview was held, has a large fireplace and a french window leading onto a terrace constructed by Durrell himself. From the terrace one has a view of the small valley at the end of which he lives. It is a bare rocky district, full of twisted olive-trees, destroyed in a blight a few years back.

Lawrence Durrell is a short man, but in no sense a small one. Dressed in jeans, a tartan shirt, a navy-blue pea-jacket,

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he looks like a minor trade-union official who has successfully absconded with the funds. He is a voluble, volatile personality, who talks fast and with enormous energy. He is a gift for an interviewer, turning quite stupid questions into apparently intelligent ones by assuming that the interviewer meant something else. Though he was rather distrustful of the tape-recorder, he acquiesced in its use. He smokes heavily, *Gauloises bleues*. When at rest he looks like Laurence Olivier; at other times his face has all the ferocity of a professional wrestler.

He has managed to spend most of his life near the Mediterranean, apart from two years in South America which he did not like very much. He has frequently been employed in the Foreign Service, during the "police action" in Cyprus as Press Officer (as a result of which he wrote *Bitter Lemons*), and for four years in Belgrade. He has satirized his experiences in *Esprit de Corps* and *Stiff Upper Lip*. Among his numerous writings are six volumes of poetry, as well as a *Selected Poems*, eight novels, including the forthcoming *Clea* which will conclude his quartet, a verse play, three books about Mediterranean islands (Corfu, Rhodes, and Cyprus), a children's book, a translation of *Pope Joan*, and a book of criticism.

The interview was recorded on April 23rd, 1959, the birthday of William Shakespeare and Scobie of Durrell's quartet. It took place after lunch, and was followed by an evening in which talk was interrupted only for refreshment.

It commenced with Durrell reviewing his early life: born in India, 1912, sent home to England when he was 12, schooled for four years at Canterbury, at 16 started his first book, *Pied Pipers of Lovers*, finished it at 18, failed to enter Cambridge University...

INTERVIEWERS

What did you do after Cambridge turned you down?

DURRELL

Well, for a time I had a small allowance. I lived in London. I played the piano in a night club—the "Blue Peter" in St

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Martin's Lane, of all places—until we were raided by the police. I worked as an Estate Agent in Leytonstone and had to collect rents, and was badly bitten by dogs. I tried everything, including the Jamaica Police. I have been driven to writing by sheer ineptitude. I wanted to write, of course, always. I did a certain amount of stuff but I couldn't get anything published—it was too bad. I think writers today learn so much more quickly. I mean, I could no more write as well at their age than fly.

INTERVIEWERS

Had you written anything before *Pied Pipers of Lovers*?

DURRELL

Oh yes, since the age of eight I have been madly scribbling.

INTERVIEWERS

How long did you stay in London before you decided to leave?

DURRELL

In my parents' view, only Colonial Office jobs or the Army were then respectable; their dream was to see me as an Indian Civil Servant. Thank God I escaped it, but I manfully did my best to try all these things. I think I must have failed more examinations in about three years than probably anyone of my weight, height, size and religion. But my parents, who were unwisely sending me quite large sums of money, didn't realize that I was putting it all into night clubs and fast cars and living a perfectly stupid puppy-clubman sort of life, do you see? I think the first breath of Europe I got was when I went on a reading party for one final cram for something—I think it was for Cambridge again, which I must have tried about eight times, I suppose. Mathematics—three, two, one, nought—it was always this damn thing. I was taken to Switzerland, you see, which gave me a glimpse of Paris on the way, and I went to a reading party which was conducted by a very deaf old scholar, and instead of reading I suddenly had a look at Lausanne, Vevey, and the lakes there, and on

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the way back managed to get three days in Paris which converted me to Europe as such. And then after this whole question of being educated failed and faded out, I made my way immediately for Paris.

INTERVIEWERS

Was it then that you met Henry Miller?

DURRELL

Oh, no, that was much later. I went to Paris for a brief period and then I came back and convinced my family, who were dying of catarrh, that it was necessary to get out of England for a breath of air and see some new landscapes and places. And it was then that I persuaded them that Greece was a good idea, which my brother has recounted in his book on Greece. So then I went ahead and they all followed about a year later, and then began this wonderful period in Corfu of—oh what? I suppose five or six years?—really until the outbreak of the war. In the meantime I'd got married and, you know, I was trying everything.

INTERVIEWERS

It seems to me that your writing very much improved when you got to Corfu. For instance, *Panic Spring* is very much better than *Pied Piper of Lovers.*

DURRELL

Yes. It's still a damn bad book. There's quite a gap in between there, you know. *Panic Spring* I think I wrote there, actually. I used all the color material I could get from Corfu, there's no doubt.

INTERVIEWERS

And since then you have never lived in England at all, have you?

DURRELL

Well, no, I haven't really. I have not been domiciled in England. I have had the odd six months at a time, I mean,

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which is just about the length of time I enjoy England for. It gives you time to see your friends, get all the free meals you can, and everyone is glad to see you, to begin with, and so on. But I must confess that I've been a European since I was 18, and I think it is a grave national defect that we aren't Europeans anymore. We were talking today at lunch about Kingsley Amis. I was thinking about the anti-living-abroad trend or something—which implies a sort of unpatriotic attitude on my part—but, you see, my heroes of my generation, the Lawrences, the Norman Douglases, the Aldingtons, the Eliots, the Graveses, their ambition was always to be a European. It didn't qualify their Englishness in any way, but it was recognized that a touch of European fire was necessary, as it were, to ignite the sort of dull sodden mass that one became living in an unrestricted suburban way. Things would have been vastly different if I had had a very large private income, been a member of the gentry, had a charming country house and a flat in town and the ability to live four months of the year in Europe: I should certainly have been domiciled in London. But when you're poor and you have to face shabby boarding-houses and all the dreariness of South Ken or Bayswater or Woburn Place, with only the chance of seeing Europe in snippets of a month at a time, you have to make the vital decision as to whether you live in Europe and visit England, or whether you live in England and visit Europe.

INTERVIEWERS

There is still quite a lot of violent anti-bourgeois England in your early things.

DURRELL

I think part of it I may have got from my heroes of that time—Lawrence, as I said, and Aldington, and so on—but it's more than just a fashionable thing. I think that, as I say, in England, living as if we are not part of Europe, we are living against the grain of what is nourishing to our artists, do you see? There seems to be an ingrown psychological thing about it, I don't know why it is. You can see it reflected

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even in quite primitive ways like this market business now —the European Common Market. It's purely psychological, the feeling that we are too damned superior to join this bunch of continentals in anything they do. And I think that's why it is so vitally important for young artists to identify more and more with Europe. As for me, I have joined the Common Market, as it were. But, mind you, that doesn't qualify one's origins or one's attitudes to things. I mean if I'm writing, I'm writing for England—and so long as I write English it will be for England that I have to write.

INTERVIEWERS

You show a great respect for England in many of your things—for instance, the General Uncebunke poems.

DURRELL

Well, of course, yes. You musn't forget that I'm a mixed-up son of a failed B.A. colonial of Benares University. And to a certain extent, being a colonial, you have these wild romantic dreams about "Home." I mean Roy Campbell is another example of a mixed-up kid from another colony.

INTERVIEWERS

You didn't find it difficult to write in England, did you?

DURRELL

No, I think it's a most creative landscape. It's a *violently* creative landscape. I think the only thing that's wrong is the way we're living in it.

INTERVIEWERS

Can you summarize what's wrong with the way we're living in it?

DURRELL

The things one notices immediately are petty—it's the construction of a sort of giant pin-table of inhibitions and restrictive legislation and ignoble, silly defences against feeling,

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really. That's what it amounts to. Of course there may be other mitigating factors which one leaves out when one is talking jolly glibly. If you put a writer in the pontiff's seat, God knows what you might expect out of his mouth—you know, there may be economic conditions. It may be just that England is too overcrowded to be able to live in a joyous—

INTERVIEWERS

Mediterranean way?

DURRELL

—No, not necessarily Mediterranean. One of the writers I reread every two or three years is Surtees, and I very much hoped that England was going to be Surtees' England—a vulgar, jolly, roistering England, not especially aesthetic or cultivated or delicate in any sense, but something with its vulgar roots in food, sex, and good living. By which I don't mean fine living or refinement of values, because those are just the top-dressing. It is at the roots that something's wrong.

INTERVIEWERS

It is the whole attitude towards living in England that's wrong, then?

DURRELL

One says that, but what I want to say is that it is wrong for me only. I don't wish to correct it. I am not a proselytizer. I wouldn't know if you asked me tomorrow how I'd go about making that English nation over into something nearer my heart's desire. I am simply trying to explain to you why one is always an English orphan, as a writer, as an artist; and one goes to Europe because, like a damn cuckoo, one has to lay these eggs in someone else's nest. Here in France, in Italy, and Greece, you have the most hospitable nests, you see, where there's very little chi-chi about writing or artists as such, but which provide the most extraordinarily congenial frames in which a job of work can be done. Here one feels on a par with a good or bad cheese—the attitude to art of a Frenchman is the attitude to what is viable—eatable, so to

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speak. It is a perfectly down to earth *terre à terre* thing, you see. Yet they don't treat Camembert with less reverence than they treat Picasso when he comes to Arles: they are in the same *genre* of things. But in England everyone is worried to death about moral uplift and moral downfall, and they never seem to go beyond that problem, simply because they feel separated from the artists. It's the culture that separates, you see, and turns the artist into a sort of refugee. It's not a question of residence. Even the home artist has to fight for recognition: instantly, people don't recognize that he is as good as good cheddar. It's a different category to them.

INTERVIEWERS

Who would you say was the first Englishman who felt this particularly?

DURRELL

It goes back all the way. The last bunch were the Romantics. And what about Shelley, Keats and Byron and Co.? They all needed Europe. And now, this sinister decision on the part of the young—I sympathize with them personally—Kingsley Amis and John Wain, admirable writers both—shut up all through the war years in England, with Europe all ploughed up anyhow, and by the end of the war Europe really didn't mean anything to them.

INTERVIEWERS

Do you think the war made it worse?

DURRELL

Oh yes. And also the financial restrictions on getting to Europe. I mean this wretched travel allowance thing. The whole complex of "Stay out of Europe", as it were. Which is so sad. I wouldn't go so far as to say we caused the last two world wars by our indifference to Europe, but certainly Hitler wouldn't have taken six years to mow down if we'd been very much earlier on the ball and helped Europe put him down. And perhaps that might go for the 1914 thing.

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The Europeans themselves see us as people absolutely ready at any moment to draw stumps and clear out. I am not talking simply of politics now, I'm also talking about art.

INTERVIEWERS

Do you think a young writer in England today should get out and join the Europeans?

DURRELL

Well, after all it's possible to write *Wuthering Heights* without leaving England, except for a week-end at Brussels. In fact I write perfectly well in England, but I'm always being foxed because the pubs are shut. It's just a petty symbol of the kind of limitless obstruction which is put in people's way.

INTERVIEWERS

What do you find are the best conditions for writing?

DURRELL

I've never had really comfy conditions to write under. This last time I came to France I had £400, with all kinds of impending debts like school fees and so on; I had been waiting fifteen years for this quartet of novels to form up and get ready, and when I got the signal saying the bloody thing was there and I only had to write it out, it was at the very worst period of my life, when I had no job, a tiny gratuity, and it literally was a choice—I suspected I would be driven from France and back to funds in two months, but thank God the Americans and Germans saved me.

INTERVIEWERS

Do you plan to go to America?

DURRELL

I haven't really made any plans. You know I'm so travel-stained with 15 or 16 years of it—the great anxiety of being shot at in Cyprus, being bombed, being tormented by the Marxists in Yugoslavia—that now for the first time I've

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a yen for my tiny roof. Staying put is so refreshing that it's almost anguish to go into town for a movie. I haven't seen a movie for 18 months now and I'm only 18 minutes away from one. So while on one hand I'd like to go to America I feel it's an experience I should preserve for my late 50's. Experiences of continents are much bigger than experiences of small countries. Since both America and Russia between them are going to determine the shape of our future, one is obliged as a traveller in visiting those countries to stop travelling and start thinking. It's different from going to Italy, say, where it's pure pleasure. But to go either to America or Russia means going at absolute concert pitch because you'll have to bring away some sort of judgement on the whole future of humanity from both those countries. Besides, if I went to America I'd immediately start falling in love with American girls—which would blind my vision. So I'll have to go there when all my passion is spent. No, but you see what I mean. I'd like to look at it slightly detached. An official flight across America under auspices which would demand lectures and so forth is not the way I'd want to do it. I'd rather like to meet someone like Henry Miller secretly on the coast in a broken-down jalopy and take America as an anonymous person, an immigrant.

INTERVIEWERS

How do you write, in fact?

DURRELL

On a typewriter.

INTERVIEWERS

And are you like Darley in *Balthazar*, who finds writing so difficult? He says, for instance: "I write so slowly, with such pain... landlocked in spirit as all writers are... like a ship in a bottle sailing nowhere." Is this what you feel at all?

DURRELL

Oh no. Well, let me tell you. In the last three years, during

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this awful financial trouble, I wrote *Bitter Lemons* in six weeks, and sent it off with only the type-script corrected. It was published as it stood. *Justine* was held up by bombs, but she took about four months—really a year, because the whole middle period I dropped in order to deal with the Cyprus job. I finished it in Cyprus just before leaving. I wrote *Balthazar* in six weeks in Sommières, I wrote *Mountolive* in two months in Sommières, and finished *Clea* in about seven weeks in all. You see, the beauty of it is, that when you are really frantic and worried about money, you find that if it's going to be a question of writing to live, why, you just damn well buckle to and do it. Now none of these manuscripts have been altered, apart from *Mountolive*—the construction gave me some trouble, and I let in a hemstitch here, a gusset there—but apart from them, the bloody things have gone out of the house to the printer—apart from typing errors.

INTERVIEWERS

In fact, you find writing very easy.

DURRELL

Yes. I only pray that I can do it and nothing else.

INTERVIEWERS

Your prose seems so highly worked. Does it just come out like that?

DURRELL

It's too juicy. Perhaps I need a few money terrors and things to make it a bit clearer—less lush. I always feel I am over-writing. I am conscious of the fact that it is one of my major difficulties. It comes of indecision when you are not sure of your target. When you haven't drawn a bead on it, you plaster the whole damn thing to make sure. And that leads to over-writing. For instance, a lot of poems of my middle period got too corpulent.

INTERVIEWERS

Do you take longer over your poems than your prose?

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DURRELL

Yes—except the lucky ones which seem to come out on the back of an envelope when you are not ready for it. It's rather like spilling egg on your tie. They're written straight out, but I'm afraid they are terribly rare—about a fifth of the total amount. And the rest—I do them in handwriting—I do go over a good deal.

INTERVIEWERS

It's impossible to write a poem on a typewriter, isn't it?

DURRELL

Well, the only amazing exception to the rule is George Barker, who always composes on a typewriter. In London he used to slip in and borrow mine, and I thought he was writing letters to his family. But no, he was composing.

INTERVIEWERS

Have you written a lot of anonymous and pseudonymous stuff?

DURRELL

I've done hundreds and thousands of words of feature articles, all buried in remote periodicals. Some under my own name, some under initials. In Cairo I ran a comic column. And then I've written millions of words of Foreign Office dispatches—a much harder job than any foreign correspondent's because I was the buffer state between, say, four and four hundred correspondents in a situation where a statement of policy was expected on a split-second basis and so watertight that it wouldn't fall apart under analysis. Of course, to make that kind of statement you have to have a policy, and in most of the places where I worked we didn't. In fact, I was selling a pig in a poke most of the time, living on my wits. Or as Sir Henry Wotton said: "lying abroad for my country". But I mean it's an incomparable training, and by rubbing shoulders with a vast variety of journalists I learned most of the tricks of the trade—most of them rather shabby tricks,

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mind you, and magpie tricks and easy to learn. But one of the lessons, writing as you do under pressure in the journalistic world, is that you learn concision, which is invaluable, and you also learn to work for a deadline. Whenever the deadline is you've got to do it and you've got to have the will to do it. Well, you do it. Of course, the element of luck is very great. I might have written all my things and not had a publisher, or I might not have written them well enough to sell them... I have to admit in my heart of hearts that I could have written books twice as good as the quartet and not have sold 300 copies. The element of luck is absolutely mixed up with the whole thing.

INTERVIEWERS

Do you regard any of your writing as pot-boiling?

DURRELL

I have had to do a lot of pot-boiling in my career. Let me say this: if one stays absolutely sincere and honest towards a form—even when I'm writing this Antrobus nonsense, I'm writing it with a reverence to P. G. Wodehouse. I mean every form thoroughly exploited and honestly dealt with is not shameful. So that pot-boiling as an idea of someone writing with a type-writer in his cheek or something—I can't say I do that. I mean I put as much hard work into a dull Antrobus story, which may or may not come off, as I put into the next chapter of the book I have to get on with.

INTERVIEWERS

Why did you publish *Panic Spring* under a pseudonym?

DURRELL

The appallingly bad trade record of my first novel. It was so hideously bad that when I shifted publishers from Cassells to Faber, Faber made it a condition to wipe out my past and start me off with a new name. They had the grace after they saw *The Black Book* to say that I was a good enough writer

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to deserve having my own name, and allowed me to go back to it.

INTERVIEWERS

Do you consider *The Black Book* important to the evolution of the Justine series?

DURRELL

Only in the sense that it was important for my evolution, you know, my inside evolution. It was my first breakthrough. I don't regard it as a good book. In fact, I wince at it a bit, and there are parts of it which I think probably are a bit too obscene and which I wouldn't have written that way now... but, how shall I say, I turned myself inside out in that book. Mr Eliot is kind enough to praise it very highly, and what he is praising is not the book—which is more a curiosity of literature than a contribution to it—but that as a boy of 24 I had to undergo a sort of special crisis even to write the book at all and *that* was what was truthful, not the book itself, not the paper with stuff on it. It was the act of making the breakthrough and suddenly hearing your own tone of voice, like being reborn, like cracking the egg all of a sudden. And that's what it was for me. I cracked the crust in that book and the lava was there, and I had only to find a way of training the lava so it didn't spill over everything and burn everything up. I had to canalize it. That was the problem of the next ten years. Poetry turned out to be an invaluable mistress. Because poetry is form, and the wooing and seduction of form is the whole game. You can have all the apparatus in the world, but what you finally need is something like a—I don't know what—a lasso... a very delicate thing, for catching wild deer. Oh, no, I'll give you an analogy for it. To write a poem is like trying to catch a lizard without its tail falling off. Did you know that? In India when I was a boy they had great big green lizards there, and if you shouted or shot them their tails would fall off. There was only one boy in the school who could catch lizards intact. No one knew quite how he did it. He had a special soft way of going up to them, and he'd bring them back with their tails on. That

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strikes me as the best analogy I can give you. To try and catch your poem without its tail falling off.

INTERVIEWERS

Which of your books do you like most? Which are you most satisfied with?

DURRELL

(*pause*) I suffer from terrible nausea about my own work, purely physical nausea. It sounds stupid, but the fact is I write at a terrific speed, and... you cross inner resistances like you cross a shoal of transmitters when you are fiddling with the dial on a radio. By the time the thing is in typescript, it is really with physical nausea that I regard it. When the proofs come back I have to take an aspirin before I can bring myself really to read it through. Occasionally when I'm asked to correct or edit a version, I always ask someone to do it for me. I don't know why. I just have a nausea about it. Perhaps when one day I get something I really do like, I won't have to take aspirin.

INTERVIEWERS

Once you've finished one thing you want to get on with the next?

DURRELL

Well, yes. It is sort of peeled skin, you see, and anything you let into that skin is just patching something already thrown aside. It's rather like assaulting the damn thing once and for all. If it comes off, well, you're in luck. If it's a failure, no amount of niggling is going to do it any good. That's how I feel. I know it's a wrong attitude, because some people can, with patience, resurrect and re-tailor things. But I can't. I write very fast, I throw away.

INTERVIEWERS

Have you thrown away a lot?

DURRELL

Hundreds of books, yes. No, that's an exaggeration. No,

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I mean hundreds of passages. What I do is try and write a slab of 10,000 words, and if it doesn't come off, I do it again.

INTERVIEWERS

How long does it take you to write 10,000 words?

DURRELL

10,000 words? Two pages a thousand, twenty pages, ... oh, two days. It varies of course according to different circumstances, but in general, when one is in good form one can really pour it out.

INTERVIEWERS

Have you written any short stories?

DURRELL

I have, yes, three or four, but the length worries me. There are two things which feel uncomfortable and awkward to me... like a wooden leg. One is the short story of about 4000 words, and the other is the feature for the *Times*. I could easily give them 5000 words or 8000 words, but I'm damned if I can do anything under 1000. So what I have to do is overwrite, give them 8000, and let them cut it down to their required size. As for the short story, I've done, as I say, several, but I've never felt happy in the form. Either I've felt it should be another 40 pages, in which case it becomes a junior novel, a concertina novel, or else I've felt it should be two pages... O. Henry and finish, you know. I admire the form, but it doesn't come easily to me.

INTERVIEWERS

You said you had fifteen years waiting for your quartet to arrive. You said you had signals saying it was coming. Could you explain that a little?

DURRELL

Well, it's simply a sort of premonitory sense that one day one was going to put one's whole shoulder behind a partic-

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ular punch. But one had to be patient and wait and let it form up, and not catch it in the early jelly stage before it had set properly, and ruin it by a premature thing. That explains why I have hung around in the Foreign Service for so long—keeping the machine running by writing other sorts of things, but waiting patiently, and now I suddenly felt this was it, and this was the moment, and bang—at least I hope, bang.

INTERVIEWERS

You seem to use the same kind of material, and often the same characters again and again, in your novels, in your poems and in the travel books. One of your critics has said: "Durrell has never made any proper distinction in his writing between real people and imaginary persons." Would you agree with that?

DURRELL

Yes, certainly.

INTERVIEWERS

Are these characters that reappear personae or real people?

DURRELL

No, they are personae, I think. They are not real people. There is hardly a snatch of autobiography. Most of the autobiography is in places and scenes and ambiances. I think it is not understood to what a limited extent artists have any experience at all, you know. People imagine them to have absolutely boundless experience. In fact I think that they are as nearsighted as moles, and if you limit your field to your own proper capabilities it is astonishing how little you know about life. It sounds a paradox, but I think it's true. I think the magnification of gifts magnifies the defects as well. One of the things I have strongly is the defect of vision. For example I can't remember any of the wild flowers that I write about so ecstatically in the Greek islands, I have to look them up. And Dylan Thomas once told me that poets only

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know two kinds of birds at sight: one is a robin and the other a seagull, he said, and the rest of them he had to look up, too. So I'm not alone in the defect of vision. I have to check my own impressions all the time.

INTERVIEWERS

In spite of that I understand you're also a painter.

DURRELL

Yes, but I'm a dauber.

INTERVIEWERS

Well, it's always seemed to me that you have a very visual imagination. Even if you don't remember things accurately, at least you imagine them very vividly.

DURRELL

I think that's the juggling quality I have. This gentleman who has just been dissecting me astrologically tells me that, apart from the evasion and the flight and non-comprehension of what I really am and what I really feel, I am the supreme trickster. Which is probably why my unkinder critics always seize on something like "sleight-of-hand" or "illusionist", which are actually the words this chap uses. But fortunately I'm not to blame. I gather it's something to do with the Fishes, to which I belong. In other words he says quite plainly that Pisceans are a bunch of liars, and when you add to that an Irish background, you have got some pretty hefty liar.

INTERVIEWERS

Wouldn't you say this was true of all artists probably—that they lie all the time?

DURRELL

Well, they fabricate, I suppose. They're all egotists, you see, fundamentally, I suppose. It's a form of self-aggandissement, writing at all, isn't it?

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INTERVIEWERS

Do you pay any attention to what your critics say?

DURRELL

No. Because then I get blocks. This won't sound very reasonable to you, either: I have discovered quite recently that the characteristic Freudian resistances to confessions of any sort, which are very well represented in all the writing blocks one goes through—the dizzy fits, the nauseas, and so on and so forth, which almost every writer has recorded—are a standard pattern for all kinds of creative things. They are simply forms of egotism. And egotism can be inflamed very easily by a good review, or a bad review for that matter, and you can get a nice tidy block which will cost you two days of work. And when you've got to get the money for the work, you can't afford it. So I don't read reviews unless they're sent to me. Usually they go to my agent because they help to sell foreign rights. And it sounds very pompous, but really I think they have a bad influence on one, and even the good ones make you a bit ashamed. In fact I think the best regimen is to get up early, insult yourself a bit in the shaving-mirror, and then pretend you're cutting wood, *which is really just about all the hell you are doing*—if you see what I mean. But all the Jungian guilt about the importance of one's message, and all that sort of thing—well, you get a nice corpulent ego standing in the way there, telling you that you're so damn clever that you're almost afraid to write it down, it's so wonderful. And the minute you get that, where are your checks going to come from for next month's gas, light and heat? You can't afford it.

INTERVIEWERS

What a splendidly pragmatic view of writing.

DURRELL

I'm forced to it, you see: I'm writing for a living.

INTERVIEWERS

Are you conscious of any specific influence in your writing?

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DURRELL

You know I'm not quite sure about the word, because I copy what I admire. I pinch. When you say "influences" it suggests an infiltration of someone else's material into yours, semi-consciously. But I read not only for pleasure, but as a journeyman, and where I see a good effect I study it, and try to reproduce it. So that I am probably the biggest thief imaginable. I steal from people—my seniors, I mean. And in fact, *Panic Spring*, which you said was a respectable book, seemed to me dreadful, because it was an anthology, you see, with five pages of Huxley, three pages of Aldington, two pages of Robert Graves, and so on—in fact all the writers I admire. But they didn't influence me. I pinched effects, I was learning the game. Like an actor will study a senior character and learn an effect of make-up or a particular slouchy walk for a role he's not thought of himself. He doesn't regard that as being particularly influenced by the actor, but as a trick of the trade which he owes it to himself to pick up.

INTERVIEWERS

It has been said that in your poetry you were considerably influenced by Auden.

DURRELL

Well, there again I pinched. Yes, of course. He is a great master of colloquial effects which no one before him dared to use.

INTERVIEWERS

Did you consciously develop your own style of writing, or did it just come naturally?

DURRELL

I don't think anyone can, you know, develop a style consciously. I read with amazement, for example, of old Maugham solemnly writing out a page of Swift every day when he was trying to learn the job, in order to give himself a stylistic purchase as it were. It struck me as something I could never do. No. When you say "consciously" I think you're wrong. I mean

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it's like "Do you consciously dream?" One doesn't know very much about these processes at all. I think the writing itself, grows you up, and you grow the writing up, and finally you get an amalgam of everything you have pinched with a new kind of personality which is your own, and then you are able to pay back these socking debts with a tiny bit of interest —which is the only honorable thing for a writer to do—at least a writer who is a thief like me.

INTERVIEWERS

You said you admired Norman Douglas?

DURRELL

I admire him because he was a European.

INTERVIEWERS

But stylistically?

DURRELL

Both as a man *and* a stylist. His was a writing personality that I admired and still admire very much. You see, he was unsnobbish, and yet he was the extreme stylist of the silver age... and in my day it is a very rare quality to have someone who is a good stylist without being snobbish. The delicacy and tact and the stylish gentlemanly thing was so well matched in Douglas that it carried no affectations; he was not trying to be pompous or anything. He is the happy example of the style perfectly married to the man. I never met him, but I'm sure his speaking tone was exactly like his writing tone. That easy informal Roman silver-age style is something everyone should be able to enjoy and appreciate. It wouldn't do if you were going to tackle a large-scale work like *War and Peace*, or the later Dostoevsky, or even the sort of thing that Henry Miller is doing. It would just not be adaptable enough for it. It's a finished, delicate thing. It's like chamber music. But style is in a separate box, you know. I have never really been a stylist deliberately. The stylists have taught me economy, which is what I very badly needed. Being naturally over-efflorescent, I have always probably learned more from the

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sort of writers I have never really imitated. They taught me just as feature journalism told me to put the most important fact in the first sentence,—a simple gimmick, as it were. You can learn from Lytton Strachey, for example, to write something balanced and pointed, as shortly as possible. It is condensation I admired in them.

INTERVIEWERS

Do you regard your quartet as your *magnum opus?*

DURRELL

It is for *me*, so to speak. It's as high up the ladder as I can climb at this moment, you know, and it cost a good deal of effort to write. I am particularly proud of it because I have been able to write it under these difficulties. It gives me more pleasure for that reason, even though I probably won't ever read it again. Of its relative importance, I don't know. The most interesting thing about it for me is the form, and those ideas are not mine.

INTERVIEWERS

You say at the beginning of *Balthazar* that the central topic of the book is an investigation of modern love.

DURRELL

Yes.

INTERVIEWERS

Justine and *Balthazar* bear this out, but there is a complete change of focus in *Mountolive*.

DURRELL

It was simply a shift from subjective to objective. *Mountolive* is an account of the thing by an invisible narrator, as opposed to somebody engaged in the action.

INTERVIEWERS

One critic has said: "The novel is only half secretly about

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art, the great subject of modern artists." How do you feel about that?

DURRELL

The theme of art is the theme of life itself. This artificial distinction between artists and human beings is precisely what we are all suffering from. An artist is only someone unrolling and digging out and excavating the areas normally accessible to normal people everywhere, and exhibiting them as a sort of scarecrow to show people what can be done with themselves.

INTERVIEWERS

You have got a lot of writers in your books—Pursewarden, Darley, Arnauti, Balthazar, the author of *Mountolive*—which does seem to show a particular concern with the artist's view of things.

DURRELL

I see what you mean, but I think it comes from this artificial distinction of artists as something qualitatively different from ordinary human beings.

INTERVIEWERS

How do you feel about Proust's name being mentioned in most critics' analyses of the Justine series?

DURRELL

It's tremendously flattering, but I don't think I've done anything to cause the comparisons to be made. But the Proustian comparison does interest me from another standpoint. He seems to have summed up a particular air pocket, a particular cosmology really, and one of the things I was trying to get at was this: it seems to me in every age we are all trying... we're all, as artists, attacking as a battalion on a very broad front. Individual and temperamental personalities are incidental to the general attack and what we as artists are trying to do is to sum up in a sort of metaphor the cosmology

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of a particular moment in which we are living. When an artist does that completely and satisfactorily he creates a crisis in the form. The artists immediately following him become dissatisfied with the existing forms and try to invent or grope around for new forms. Proust, I think, in his work exemplified the Bergsonian universe—the universe of his time—and then you find a complete breakdown in the form. The big artists who followed him, Joyce, Lawrence and Virginia Woolf, went off hunting frantically for a new form... I mean Joyce even goes so far as Homer, it's ridiculous, why Homer? Anyway you see forms becoming psychic. *Finnegans Wake* begins and ends with the same words. The word cycles became obsessional, and in Joyce, of course, there is such an emphasis on time as to literally block the drains: if you get too much time into works of art you stop the process—so that the focus in the works of Joyce, Woolf and the rest seems like a colossal blown-up image of an incident, which, of course, *is* the Bergsonian eternity. Now *I* oppose to this the Einsteinian concept, trying to see if I can't apply Einsteinian time instead of Bergsonian time. A mathematical friend of mine says I'm crazy, an idiot, that you can't create a continuum of words. Of course it sounds crazy, doesn't it? I mean you can't apply scientific hypothesis to the novel. On the other hand, is it so crazy? Just as I see artists as a great battalion moving through paint, words, music towards cosmological interpretation, I see them linked on the right and left hand by the pure scientists. Ideas are sort of biological entities to me. Now my mathematical friend says that the Einsteinian concept of welding time to matter is purely mathematical and cannot be expressed in any other way; if you try you're simply violating the concept. That to me seems the reverse of Keats drinking damnation to Newton because he explained the rainbow. And besides I don't pretend what I'm doing is a continuum exactly. What I'm saying is that Mercator's projection is not a sphere but it does give you a very good impression of what a sphere is like. It serves its purpose and that's how I regard this continuum idea of mine. It may be that I'm violating sacred territory, and indeed

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that I'm seeing the whole thing in the wrong set of terms, but for the moment it seems valid. If in the quartet my people tend, as some people complain, to be dummies, it's because I'm trying to light them from several different angles. I'm trying to give you stereoscopic narrative with stereophonic personality and if that doesn't mean anything to anybody at least it should be of interest to radio engineers.

INTERVIEWERS

Can you say how some of these ideas are motivated in the quartet?

DURRELL

Well, let me think. Let me explain it to you this way: the ideas behind this thing, which have nothing whatsoever to do with the fun of it as reading matter, are roughly these. Eastern and Western metaphysics are coming to a point of confluence in the most interesting way. It seems unlikely in a way, but nevertheless the two major architects of this breakthrough have been Einstein and Freud. Einstein torpedoed the old Victorian material universe—in other words, the view of matter—and Freud torpedoed the idea of the stable ego so that personality began to diffuse. Thus in the concept of the space-time continuum you've got an absolutely new concept of what reality might be, do you see? Well, this novel is a four-dimensional dance, a relativity poem. Of course, ideally all four volumes should be read simultaneously, as I say in my note at the end: but as we lack four-dimensional spectacles the reader will have to do it imaginatively, adding the part of time to the other three, and holding the whole lot in solution in his skull. I call it a continuum, though in fact it can't be quite accurate in the sense that Mercator's projection represents a sphere; it's a continuum but *isn't* one, if you see what I mean. So that really this is only a kind of *demonstration* of a possible continuum. But the thoughts which followed from it, and which I hope will be sort of—*visible*, as it were, in the construction of the thing, will be first of all, the ego as a series of masks, which Freud started, a de-personalization

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which was immediately carried over the border by Jung and Groddek and company to end up where... but in Hindu metaphysics. In other words, the non-personality attitude to the human being is a purely Eastern one: it is a confluence that is now approaching in psychology. Simultaneously, this fascinating theory of indeterminacy—which I'm told you can't demonstrate except mathematically—is precisely the same thing in space-time physics, so to speak. So that I regard those two things as the cosmological touchpoints, as it were, of our attitude to reality today. In other words, I see Eastern and Western metaphysics getting jolly close together. And while I'm not trying to write a thesis—I'm just trying to write a series of novels which are good fun whether you look deep or shallow, but which keep their end up as an honest job of work—nevertheless basically that's the sort of mix, that's the sort of soup-mix, I'm at. And I'm just as much in the dark as the reader, in the sense that I undertook this thing in good faith, I didn't know what the results would be, and I still don't know. It might be a muck-up, do you see? But those are the ideas I would have liked to indicate, without writing a thesis on them or expressing them in any more clarified form.

INTERVIEWERS

Don't you think that, in publishing *Justine* first, you gave a false impression of the series as a whole?

DURRELL

Ideally, had I not been short of money, I would have written the four, and matched them properly, because there are still quite a lot of discrepancies which will have to be tidied up if the thing is gathered. But shortage of money made me compose them one after the other. There is also another thing I must confess to you: while I was tackling this idea, I didn't know whether it was possible, humanly possible, to do. I didn't know whether I was barking up the wrong tree, and I was quite prepared to abandon the whole series as a failure, at any point, if I felt I couldn't compass

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them, or if I felt they were coming out wrong, and the thing was an abortion. I simply approached the three sides of space and one of time as a cook will open a recipe-book and say "Let's cook this gigot." I had no idea what sort of gigot was going to come out of it. I still haven't, and we won't have until the critics get a chance to have a look at the four, and tear them all apart. But sometimes you have to take these colossal chances when you see a ray of light that beckons to you particularly.

INTERVIEWERS

How far in advance do you plot your novels?

DURRELL

Very little deliberate plotting as such. I have a certain amount of data, but the great danger of this sort of thing is a mechanical exercise in a form: and having a clear form in mind, I wanted the books to be as alive as possible. So that I was prepared at any moment to throw all the data overboard and let it live its own life, you see. So that I should say only about a third of the incidental matter was advance plotting. It's like driving a few stakes in the ground; you haven't got to that point in the construction yet, so you run ahead fifty yards, and you plank a stake in to show roughly the direction your road is going, which helps to give you your orientation. But they are very far from planned in the exact sense.

INTERVIEWERS

Where do you go from *Clea*, or more comprehensively, from the *Justine* series?

DURRELL

I haven't any clear idea of what I'm going to do, but whatever I do will depend upon trying to crack forms. You see, I have a feeling about forms that they are up in the air in the Shelleyian way. If the damn things would come down like soap bubbles and settle on my head I'd be very grateful. If the form comes off, everything comes off.

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INTERVIEWERS

I understand you're also contemplating a comic novel.

DURRELL

I have an idea for one. I see some amusing characters in the shadows, but if I attack the book I don't want to attack it in an inhibited frame of mind which might make it 'pawky' —do you have that word? it means a kind of schoolmasterish donnish intent to be funny. That I want to avoid like the plague. But one of the problems is that it is hardly permissable for me to be as vulgar as I would like. You see, I don't really think a comic novel is any good unless it's as vulgar as it is satiric. It's only with great vulgarity that you can achieve real refinement, only out of bawdry that you can get tenderness. For example, if you rule out bawdry entirely, it's astonishing how anemic your love lyric becomes. It wouldn't please me at all to write a mildly smiling book which was just witty, though, of course, there have been astonishing strides in that vein: Evelyn Waugh's *The Loved One* is a masterpiece that Swift would have been proud to write had he lived in our age. But I want to stay nearer Rabelais; I want to be coarse and vulgarly funny. Like the Jacobeans. I don't know whether that's permissable, whether it would come off, or whether the results might be in appalling bad taste with no redeeming feature. I'd have to face all those problems. But then again, for me they're problems of form. The exciting thing would be to conquer them inside a form or frame. Yes, that's a project I have for this winter. And also I'd like to write another play. I'm a fated dramatist in a sense. My only play was such a shambles. It's taken about fifteen years to find people who can cut it up and put it on the stage. Now for the first time the Germans are going to give me a chance to see what it looks like. Until you've had that experience you can't really become a dramatist. It's possible I shall be so disgusted that I shall never write another one, but on the other hand it's possible I shall be so fired up watching someone play it that I may fall passionately in love with the play as a form and go on to write much better plays.

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INTERVIEWERS

You mentioned form again. That is your primary interest, isn't it, whatever the art...

DURRELL

Yes, I think so. More than most people. It may be that I haven't as much personality to deploy. My interest in form might be—I'm talking seriously now, not modestly—an indication of a second-rate talent. So one has to face these things. It doesn't really matter whether you're first rate, second rate, or third rate, but it's of vital importance that the water finds its own level and that you do the very best you can with the powers that are given you. It's idle to strive for things out of your reach, just as it's utterly immoral to be slothful about the qualities you have. You see, I'm not fundamentally interested in the artist. I use him to try to become a happy man which is a good deal harder for me. I find art easy. I find life difficult.

—Julian Mitchell
—Gene Andrewski

(This is the twenty-third of a series of interviews on the Art of Fiction. Other writers interviewed are E. M. Forster, Thornton Wilder, William Faulkner, Ernest Hemingway, Alberto Moravia, François Mauriac, Henry Green, James Jones and others. Future issues will have interviews with Aldous Huxley, W. Somerset Maugham, Kingsley Amis, André Malraux, and Jean Cocteau.)

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LEARNING FROM HISTORY

I

They said, my saints, my slogan-sayers sang,
Be good, my child, in spite of all alarm.
They stood, my fathers, tall in a row and said,

Be good, be brave, you shall not come to harm.
I heard them in my sleep and muttering dream,
And murmuring cried, How shall I wake to this?

They said, my poets, singers of my song,
We cannot tell, since all we tell you is
But history, we speak but of the dead.

And of the dead they said such history
(Their beards were blazing with the truth of it)
As made of much of me a mystery.

II

As in my covered sleep I dreamed of waking,
I dreamed that I went solitary roving
Over the sunk cities of my ancestors,

Over a darkness, over a deepness swimming.
Dreaming of this I was when they spoke to me.
Lovers they bragged of, long since dead and gone,

Whose ashes through the ages of their deaths
Patiently break. Long since are they gone.
What could these lovers tell me in my sleep?

Donne's lovers saw another hemisphere,
Completing for each the world, as eye to eye
They pressed, than what I see. I am, they were.

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III

They said, my sages, my truth-tellers told
Tall tales of captains gone into their graves.
How pitiful they fell that had been bold!

The little that *they* tell is, history saves
Little, and what it saves is hardly told,
And what is hardly told is hardly heard.

Something repeats, they say. Of what it is,
Or how be told, these captains have no word,
Soldiers, who pressed a distant battleground

With a proud foot made proud by still another
Image of what we were. Now they are sunk
Under the wave of earth. I am, they were.

IV

I dreamed all this as in my childhood I
Lay patiently covered up, waiting for morning.
Lovers there were, and captains, crowding my room,

Sages, and poets, telling me almost nothing
But brave, be brave, we tell as to a child
What can be told only in his awakening.

Loudly my lordly moralizers spoke,
Calling me from my sleep, yet still in my dreaming.

—DAVID FERRY

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EVENING IN THE PARK

The children have packed up the light
And gone home for the bedtime story
In which Jack wakes the Sleeping Fury.
I count tin cans and comic books;
I listen for the wheel of night,
That furry rim, those velvet spokes.

Some know it by the cloud of stars;
I know it by the rush of thought:
Images, like the shrill onslaught
Of cyclists on a black-top road,
Come on and catch me unawares:
I am the victim of their mood.

It is a rehash of the day,
The rooms remembered for their anger,
The crowded stairways for their danger,
And what the light did to a mirror
You thought you knew. It is a way
Of being faithful to one's terror.

I will sit here a little while,
Recalling how I read about
A man who found a strange way out,
The hermit of this wooded park,
Gaunt Crusoe of a nowhere isle,
Who hides his bushel in the dark.

He may be watching even now,
His dark hands up his darker sleeves,
The last of the great make-believes.
He moves in an enormous grave,
The wilderness pressed to his brow,
A man of motion without drive.

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I wonder, Does he name the trees?
And to what end? Or like a bird,
Does he know calls that know no word?
And does he conjure without number?
And when, against the moon, he sees
My silhouette, does he remember?

Batman is whispering in the wind;
The cans are jewelled with the stars,
Evening Venus and red-eyed Mars.
I am an eight-hour daylight man,
And I must go to keep my mind
Familiar and American.

—HENRI COULETTE

TIMES SQUARE

Corridors of the city
End in a deer's eye.
The deer stumbles among legs
Of humans.

The humans are tall in the night;
Stretching their arms into cramped holes,
Twisting their elastic necks
Around steel poles.

On the back of the night
Pigeons are drifting in a hot rain.

—ROBERT DAVIS

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AN EPISODE FROM PROCOPIUS

(During the reign of the Emperor Justinian, whose general, Belisarius, besieged and captured Gelimer, the Vandal King of Africa, 533 A.D., thereby restoring that continent to the Roman Empire after ninety-six years of Vandal domination.)

I

I, Gelimer, on a hill in Africa,
Recently come to my senses, although it is late,
At the end of my kingdom and my years,
Have this to offer to the world: make peace.
A rough barbarian, I tell you this.
Make peace. The hunger in my guts is wild,
My gums clack like palm fronds cracking,
But I come from a strong race. I have learned,
In my extremity, to laugh at strength.
To you, Belisarius, who ask my head,
I reply: Thanks. Not yet. Give me leave,
Rather, for as long as I can hold out
Against your legions, lord of Byzantium,
To beg three things: a lyre, a sponge, a loaf of bread.
Bread, because it is our savage need.
A sponge, because one eye is swollen from dirt.
A lyre, to accompany an ode I made
Upon my sore affliction, to make men weep.
This is what I have learned, who have seized the world
From Rome, bent Italy to her knees, made Caesars
Stain with yellow all their purple front.
Make peace.

II

I saw this morning on Mount Papua
A sight that drove all kingdoms from my head.
It made me laugh so hard, weak as I was,
That painful laughter put an end to war.
A Moorish woman, black as pitch, had scratched
Some grains of corn from somewhere, and had baked

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On the hot embers of a hearth, a cake
No bigger than a coin. Beside her watched
Her little son and my small nephew, parched
And shriveled with desire, with eyes like teeth.
My nephew seized it first, and though it still smoked
With flame and ash, he thrust it between his jaws.
He would have swallowed it, but the other, choked
With rage of famine beat him, tore his hair,
Until the prize disgorged from the burnt throat
Fell into the black boy's and he swallowed quick.
And so, dear Belisarius, I came out
To you as you see me now, still laughing hard.
Take Africa. Such prizes make me sick.

—HAROLD NORSE

LOVE THE BUTCHER BIRD LURKS EVERYWHERE

A gather of apricots fruit pickers left
gleam like reasons for light going higher, higher;
I look half as hard as I can to tease
the fruit out of its green.
    (It is time to run lest pity overtake us,
    and calamity pit invents to accompany itself:
    to sigh is a stern act—we are judged by this air.)

Down the steady eye of the charging bear
a gun barrel swerves—intention, then flame;
and willows do tricks to find an exact place in the wind:
resolution steady, bent to be true.
    (While there's time
    I call to you by all these dubious guides:
    "Forsake all ways except the way we came.")

—WILLIAM STAFFORD

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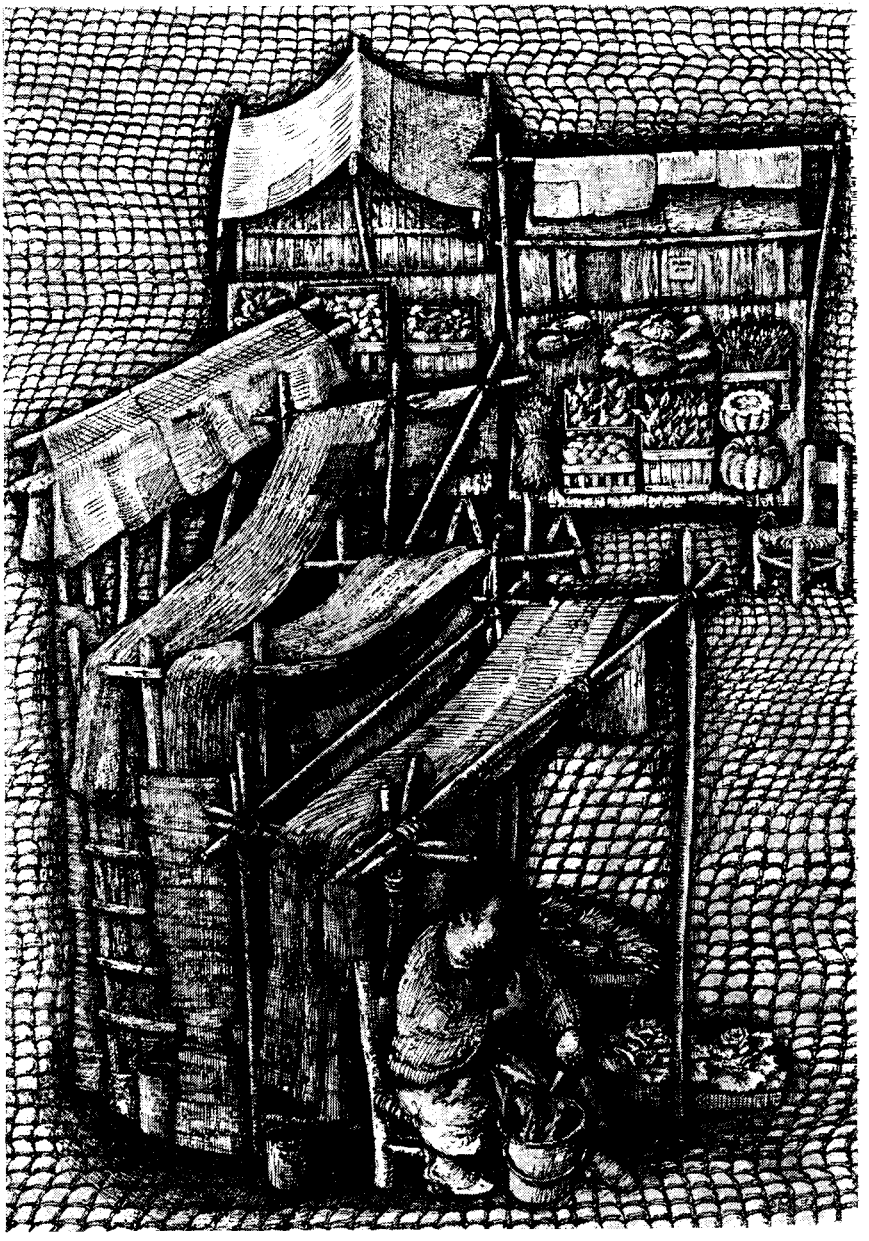

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Domenico Gnoli

Domenico Gnoli is a young Italian in his mid-twenties—a brilliant artist whose first exhibitions were held when he was eighteen. His work has been shown in many cities... Brussels, London, Rome, New York, San Francisco. He has done a number of designs for theatrical productions—among others the Old Vic's production of *As You Like It* in 1955, and John Buttler's Chamber Ballets at Spoleto's Festival of Two Worlds in 1958. His drawings of Rome, shown in these pages, were accompanied by the following notes:

Here are four of my 'Roman' drawings—I say Roman, *not* of *Rome or* about *Rome, because, just like me, they are Roman by nature, not by vocation. Four Roman drawings then, done with care, with pedantic precision—a sort of inventory of the elements of the Rome in which I grew, possibly more a Rome I remember than a Rome I know. An inventory of umbrellas, chairs, crates, the tables of the sidewalk cafés, fish and vegetables stocked in the shady intimacy of small markets, the solemn and dark laundries—everything, in short, that moves on the cobblestones of the narrow, unpredictable streets of the old Rome. And the smells, the noise, and then at last the night... the empty wine shops—the 'osterie' as we call them— with the odds-and-ends remaining from some informal gathering, some ready to close with the chairs on the tables so the floor can be swept, only one table still set with the chairs around it, for the tired waiters' dinners... and then the noise ceases, but the voices go on—the exclamative, mocking wise voices of the Romans. The wise voices of a wise city, these are—of skeptical, calm citizens removed from all urgency, removed quite often from these drawings too, so that the settings of their tranquil lives may speak for themselves...*

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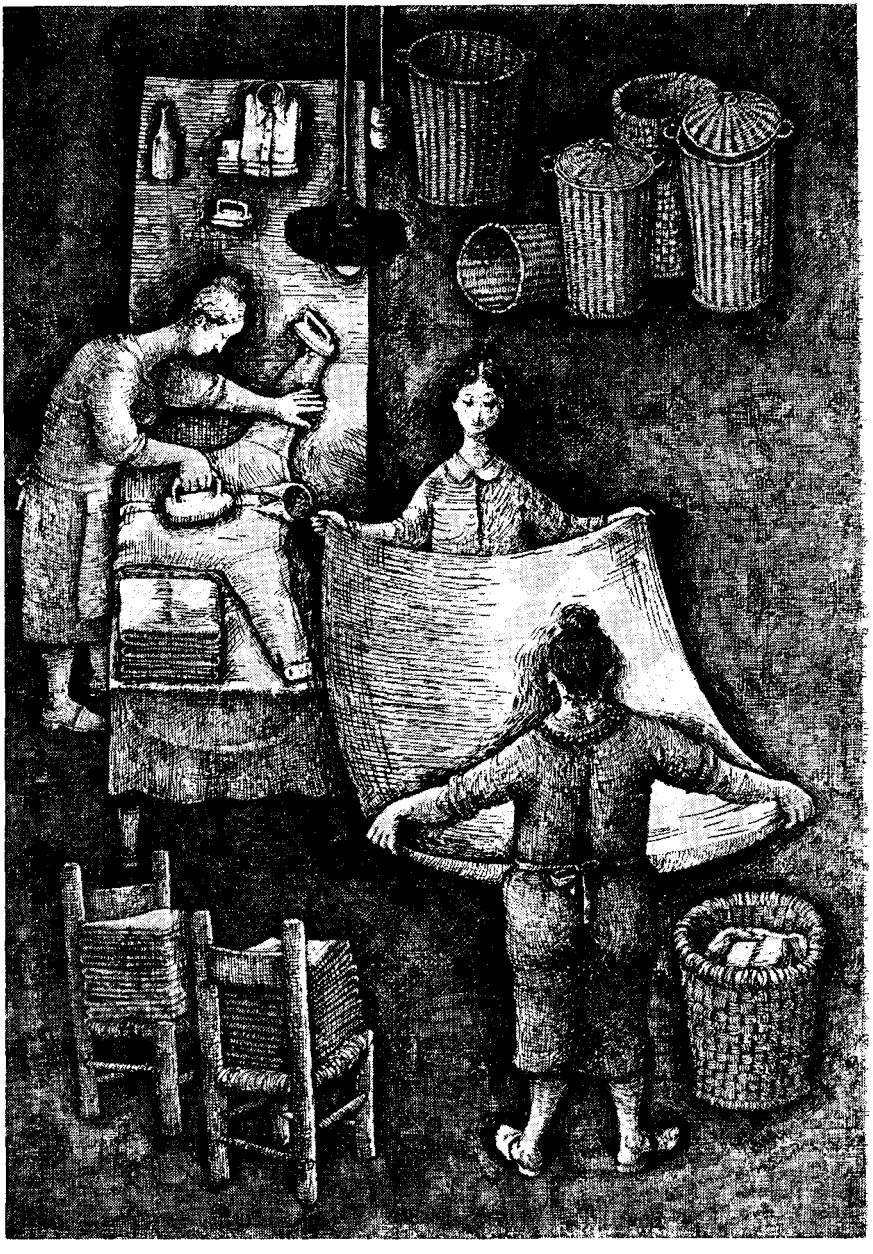

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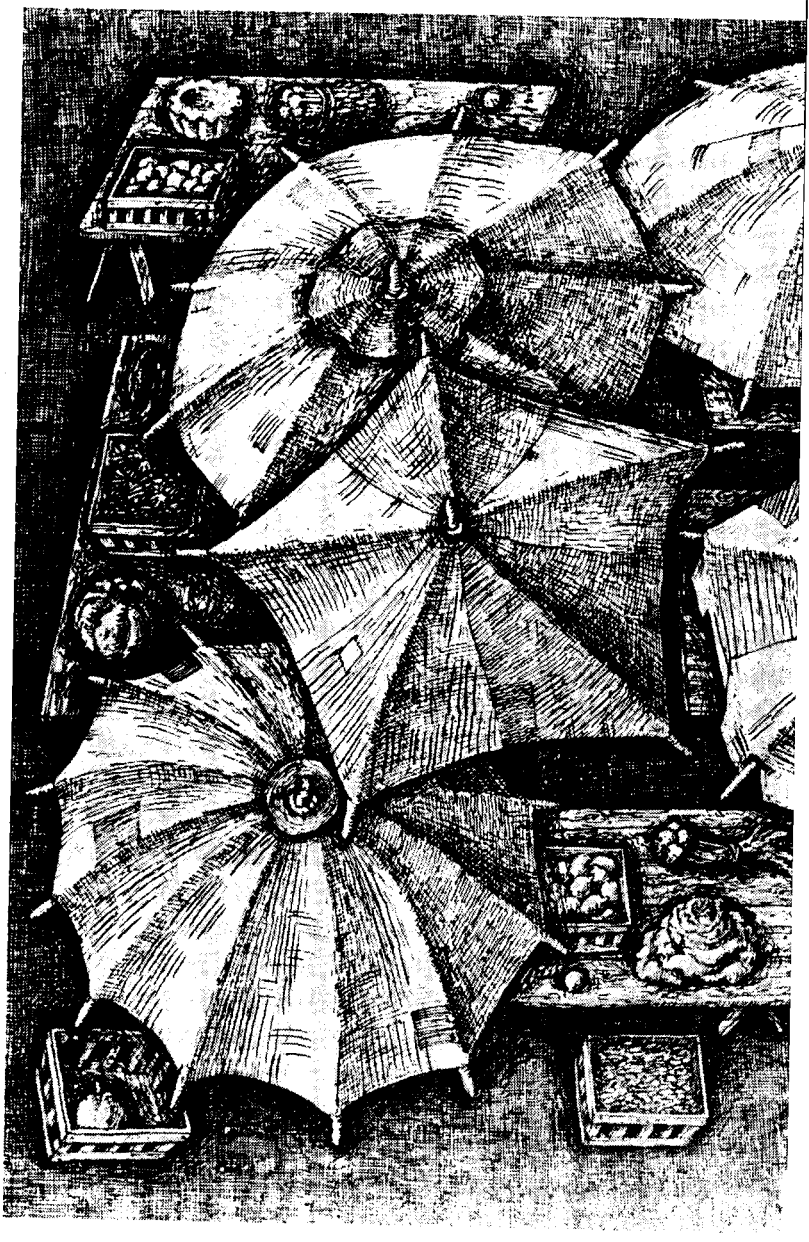

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The People of Ilion: a Reading of the Iliad

The seed of their trouble also began in an apple;
That, knowing good and evil, posed for them a choice
between goods.
Everything seemed almost necessary it followed so humanly
after that.
Toward their choice the Greeks came in their snout-
shelled barks,
Across waters there would have been room for then on
Olympos
So wide was the rift their choice left in the ranks of the gods.
It sat between their ears like a wooded lake while, for so
many years,
Locked within the soft impeachment of their walls, they
looked down
Upon the blunt sterns of the boats hauled upon their shores
Dreaming in the night, within walls with windows,
That these might some day turn on the hinges of their doors,
As often when the will to conquer or to move along
Is held in abeyance by the dumb-show of something on the
plain,
And only after while shows itself as a way
Through which that being can move too, still pasturing,
undisturbed;—
And below the walls, the angry mob of the necessity each
choice implies:
The more deeply chosen a thing is the more it leaves
disturbed.
Below their walls, as it might even be beneath the city,
These people could hear echoing thinly in the hollows of
the walls
The singing of Achaian arrows, the short heart-thrust of
handled axes
Or, man against man, the heard etching of the spear's
exchange
As once one of them might have heard at the Academy

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Philosophers making their points at logic. While, as water
seems,
Both in the lake and in the river, to run with steps of the
size needed
Not to be wholly lost in the race with the driving wind,
But whereas one gorges its way in a deep current
Shifting sand on its real— deeper bed, the blatant face of rock,
While the other shifts only as a woman does her attention
When the first look of boredom enters her admirer's face
So the Achaian power was drawn up before the walls of
Troy.
As when sometimes, deeper then the will, there is a
falling out
Between the power that builds and the few rules
That hang like knitted legends in the home of what a
home is,
Not because of the work done but about whose property it is,
Troy felt the threat only as one who walks on a garden
bridge
Is tempted to see too much of himself in the water
And, leaning over, suddenly draws back knowing what
terror in peace is.
When, in Menelaos' hands, Paris slipped from under his hat,
It was only after they had gone so far as to put an enemy's
armor on
At the very door of his ships, that Ilion ever had to face,
Like a canyon along whose bottom trickles the thin spill,
The breaking of the dam which holds above it the
woodland lake;
In which the high water then verges, sweeping toward the
sea leaves,
Trees which it had fostered, and the sunset which had
reflected—
Carrying the debris in Helen's wake and pyre of
Agamemnon's death.

—THEODORE HOLMES

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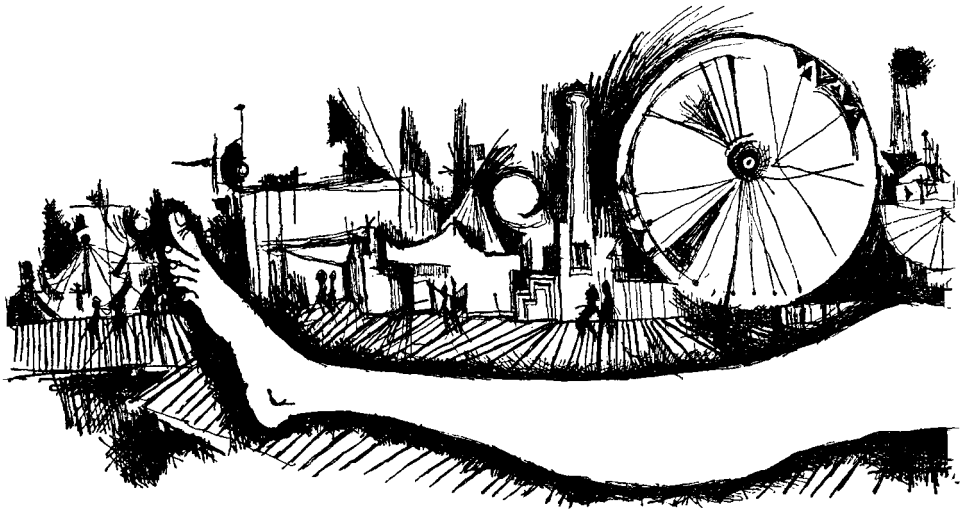

SAMUEL BLAZER

THE FIRE-EATER

THERE were moments in the life of Leavious Throop when she was all herself and all to herself. These moments had no relation to any other human being. They were not necessarily the highest or the best or even the most truthful. They simply appeared and had to be realized as such.

Now, during one of these moments, Leavious put her hands to her mouth and let them wander. Somehow, the whole of her face was no longer sensitive to the touch of her black fingers. The section of it under her right cheekbone was inexplicably numb. It looked the same as the rest of the cord-grained glaze of flesh but it would not respond even to the heaviest handpouncing. Leavious sometimes thought that perhaps all the buds of feeling on her right side had been wrenched out of her by the stench of the public toilets to which she attended. Her right profile had been turned towards the men's room now for over fifteen years and Leavious would not change her position for fear that the buds of her other cheek would be driven away as pitilessly.

Her face never really showed that she was concerned about anything at all. It was a silent continuation of her body, with her neck coming up into it as if it were splitting her head and then sawing down again through her frame. And she always wondered where her cheekbuds had gone. Oh, she had her

Drawings by Lars Bo

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OR

THE LEFT THIGH MOCKS THE WORLD

ideas about *where* exactly: into Professor Bestwicke's Astrology Gallery and out into the Coney Island heavens. Professor Bestwicke had a big placard in front of his establishment which read "There is a skeptic born every minute." Leavious had once told him that the skeptic became the fool once he walked in *there*. She did not like Professor Bestwicke and he *hated* her (she was sure). This pleased her. He had come and converted an old Bingo hall into the Astrology Gallery eight years ago. She had first seen him when he had been forced to use the public toilet while his own was being "reupholstered" (Leavious could not imagine what it would look like now) and had approached her for change. She had watched the flaccid skin on the ranting flesh of his face as his stomach violated the turnstile and had known immediately that he was a fraud. Even what he was about to do once inside that door was fake.

But her memories were making Leavious careless and weary. Her eyes would stare up at the sky which helped to bless the toys of excitement among which she sat, a sky which gathered the speed, the lungs, the tumult of amusement and made them raw, gave them to the moon to make grotesque. When Leavious looked down at the iron rail which boxed her off and seemed to go underground to where it melted, she saw

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her cheeknerves, rusting and enlarged. When she gazed at passersby, her hands rubbing the numbness, she noticed her buds in their hair, conch-shaped hair, snickering from close contact with the sweat of the rollercoaster. And she would try to reach out for them. *I don't have to go into your rotten-smelling toilet*, their hair would say, and they would pant onward.

When people did use the public rooms they would usually complain about the insects: moths mingling with the toilet paper, flies rummaging onto the soap as they were smashing it against their faces. Someone once had gone inside eating a slice of watermelon. He had come directly over to her when he had done, grumbling that flies had landed in the watermelon and then had flown into his face, wetting him with juice for which he had paid. Leavious, cheekbuds suddenly humored, had spit into the rind to replenish it.

II

There was one woman in Coney Island—Professor Bestwicke's secretary, of all people—who would take replenishment of any kind and never would complain about it. Alma Caterworster knew what to expect, that was why. Had known since her father had come home from his egg-candling one dawn and had gotten into bed with her. (Alma's mother had been a gypsy in the middle of Sepulchre Avenue in those days and always would be leaving for her location just as her husband was returning. They never recognized each other. Alma's father would ask as he came in, "Where's your mama?" and Alma would have to tell him that she had just that moment gone through the apartment door. One dawn, after she had told him this, he stood quietly by her bed as if covered with wax, then slowly, quietly and deliberately came towards her, and replied: "Good." That is how Alma had begun to know what *really* to expect.)

One dawn her father did not return from his egg-candling. Her mother had left for Sepulchre Avenue on schedule of course, but she never returned either. Alma could only sup-

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pose that her parents had met each other somewhere in the daylight, had been mutually attracted as they must have been many positions ago, and had gone off to live in sin like the tangling of bells. Alma had given up the apartment and auctioned off its contents to another gypsy who had opened a chain of empty stores. Among the belongings were: a Ming vase; the *crepes-suzettes* which her mother had finished baking before she had left (her mother had been determined that their lives should not be devoid of certain niceties which often evade ignorance, poverty and dishonesty); a male plug; a female plug (for which Alma had gotten a good price from a sex fiend who had never looked at plugs that way before); a cardboard guillotine with a cardboard guillotinee that her father had made from an eggbox; some splattered-looking marbles with which her mother had been wont to amuse herself on location.

Then Alma had filled her breasts with cookies which had been given to her by the sex fiend (she was only fourteen) and had gone off to Coney Island. Because she was lonely and taut and dissolving, Coney Island could shout at her, could furrow beneath her like a church of laurelled dead, could be a climax. Even though her father had once warned her, when the early morning light was about to reach their bed, that there are not nearly so many climaxes as there are flat beginnings, Alma was beginning to suspect her father of certain inadequacies.

As soon as she had passed the Carnival Of Amazing and had seen a thawed thin-boned girl in a misshapen, garnished whiteyellow satin short skirt, somewhat like the color of an old candle, Alma had known what she wanted to become.

The thawed thin-boned girl was, at the moment in which Alma had first noticed her, submitting to the efforts of a soggy man who was not even looking at her. Instead he had his half-face and entire mouth turned towards a meager, slush-seeming crowd which had pruned together to watch him tie the girl's hands to a crosslike wooden structure. The girl was then to demonstrate her Miraculous and yes Amazing skill in unbinding herself. In this way she was to prove herself superior to natural rotted wood and somebody's

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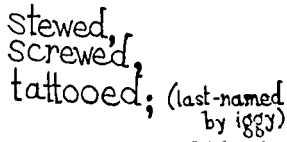
Christ somewhere. As the girl struggled casually Alma stared at her exposed thighs. Directly under the left one was a tattooed synoptic message, burned into the skin, with correct spelling and punctuation, word-below-word. It read:



and the lettering was in a sort of bluish-black, as if at one time it could have been bruises. The semi-colon after the word 'tattooed' disturbed Alma, until she decided that the girl quite probably planned to continue her history on her thigh.

Alma did not entirely understand why the thin-boned girl so decisively held her interest. The performer's actions were thoroughly unshowmanlike. Even Alma's mother who could by no means have been considered to be a front-rank accomplished gypsy (she was not able even to work her way up to the point where she could operate the premises of a vacated store) was more conscious of her rather vague audience in Sepulchre Avenue. When she would spray perfume or burn incense in the revolving doors of Liggett's and the Dime Savings, she would inhale with the best and the worst. And once she had allowed Alma to accompany her to her location before school hours. It had been the first time Alma had seen her mother in the light for over a year. Her mother had been wearing a kidney-brown ankle-length dress with a string tied so tightly round her waist that the dress-blouse overlapped into the skirt and gave the whole outfit an appearance of straightness. Her head had resembled a pompon that morning and on her wrist she wore only a genuine gold bracelet which someone in a passing car (obviously one of her continuous admirers) had given her. It had an inscription reading *If you haven't lived what have you done*? Everyone whom they had passed on their way to the traffic intersection nodded and said something to Alma's mother. The cop had said *Hello Zinnia, that's a nice little article you have along, gonna' teach her the traffic trade?* and the newsstand lady had grinned. Her mother had made Alma stand on a traffic island while she

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had proceeded to read the outstretched signalling palms of the people waiting to make turns and for green lights. Alma, the part-child, had been surprised that her mother had friends who called her Zinnia and that they didn't seem to mind the way she made her living.

Alma, watching the thin-boned girl, decided that she most reminded her, after all, of her Zinnia mother.

The girl had finished her routine by now and had gone inside through a doorway-effect pasteboard entrance. For the first time since she had paused Alma looked about her. The few people who had remained to see the finish of the untangling of the knot and to hear the lure-in of the fink in the high open ticket-booth had now dispersed, to be tricked and cajoled elsewhere, eventually successfully. Alma looked up over the facade to the oilpainted canvas signs which afforded her grotesque likenesses of grotesque worldlings: Alfy with Skin like an Alligator (His Mother was a South American Thrill Girl); ChubChub Charlene, the Lass who Dips the Scales at 350 Lbs. (Yessiree, See Her Dip the Scales from Her Exciting Glandular Disorder); Elmer Groble, Fire-Eater (See Him Eat Fire from a Faucet Six Times A Show—See Him Not Flinch!); and *the* Attraction: Anita, the Headless Girl (See Her Electric Steel Head, Hear Her Breathe and Talk through Our Exclusive Loudspeakers and *Her* Exclusive Mouth.)

Alma heard the freaks overlapping on the canvas, in their stalls, wherever they were withheld for a price—in the world. Over the fences they had toddled, frumped and flung, eating dust, singeing their heads, tearing off their limbs: the one-legged boy gave his leg to the three-legged girl, the three-eyed whore gave one eye to the Cyclops. They adjusted nature among themselves, accepting their wealth with humility, ordering philanthropy down a line with no profile for the faces in the other world. Behind the arras hypocrites conspire: behind the candles her father, coming to her with his lips spinning smoke; behind the marbles her mother, a beggaress who rode the veins of a horse, not even its skeleton. Behind her thigh the thin-boned girl. Alma bought a ticket and passed through the doorway.

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III

Immediately she entered into the arena of sawdust and railings. There was a radio broadcasting through the loudspeaker. Alma had often listened to the radio while waiting for her father and often he had neglected to turn it off when he came into bed. The song over the loudspeaker was one which she knew well and associated with a dawn when her father had been particularly cruel to her body. *Grease me my jazzwet baby, Grease me until I move Grease me my gaslit baby Get that bebop in the groove: Matabazoom—pah! Matabazoom—pah! Spread me my jazzwet baby Spread me till I wear thin Bread me my doughrised baby But be steady with my shin:*

Matabazoom—pah!
Matabazoom—pah!
Oom—
pah!

Alma seemed to collapse for a moment over her own outline. She soon regained her timidity and drew over to where the thin-boned girl was about to plunge into a slitted ornate hopechest coffin. A man stood by her and then above her as he closed the lid to the coffin. Alma stared, the thin-boned girl behind the lid. Then the man began to thrust swords rapidly into the slits of the lid, into there! my thin-boned girl and there! and there! Alma was aware of the thighs of the thin-boned girl, consummate at last, the tattoo across them scrimmaging among the daggers.

The man on Alma's left was grinning incredulously. She bent her head. As she did so she noticed that the man on her right was wearing white tights. She scanned him, up and all the way down, and then as if planularly. When she arrived at his profile after the revelling journey, she saw a singed left twirl of moustache, but most decidedly a twirl. She wanted to clasp it in her arms. For she realized that this man and his moustache were fire-eaters, while she, Alma Caterworster, was simply the daughter of an egg-candler. Oh she *would* have asked him to let her clasp it in her arms, that twirl, had he not been so absorbed in the activities of the thin-boned

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girl. And as she watched his face slowly turning more towards her yet never seeing her, she saw that it believed. It believed in the suspense which the daggers created; it believed that the fate of the thin-boned girl was unknown at that moment throughout every possible world; it believed that she would not be wronged. This face, which absorbed Alma for a very long time, was an experimenting face, tentative; committed to nothing except faith in the eventual unalterable workability of the experiment.

It was a round face, it *must* be a round face, Alma decided. Its color was swabbed on to it unmindful of arrangement. Yet it had for Alma the effect of precise and honest joy. The thin-boned girl was emerging now from the coffin, unhinged, and the man's joyous face showed genuine and prolonged relief. The fire-eater was moving away from Alma before the relief had fully left his face. Had he gazed at her she could not have met the gaze. But she had to touch him, and she did so, anonymously, gently.

Left motionless for a time, Alma resumed interest in the doings of the thin-boned girl, who was just disappearing behind a narrow apple-green curtain. Alma decided to follow her, all the while keeping in mind (but not very strongly because of the image of the fire-eater's face) what she eventually wished to become.

Making her way through what appeared to be a shoeless group of people, Alma came, overbearingly, to a four-letter word on the grey wall near the vile curtain. The word was "PRIV." She disregarded it, as one disregards a condition the subtle existence of which one has never known, and parted the curtains.

There, in gold slippers, knelt the thin-boned, about to make herself unrecognizable to the people who had anxiously stood by her coffin just a short duration ago. She was withdrawing from an escalloped shelf a peculiar arsenal of headgear which might have been a teapot fornicating with an octopus. It was, however, stainless steel, and the thin-boned had all she could do to lift it and fit it over her head. Alma gasped and stared. The becoming-headless girl turned,

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staggered up on her feet and giggled. "Whaddya' mean comin' in here where it says 'PRIVATE'?"

"I didn't know what those letters on the wall meant." Alma apologized, and besides, I wanted to make sure you were all right. Those daggers—"

"Oh *them*—" the girl laughed. "They're *calcyalated*."

Now all that Alma could distinguish of the other's face was her mouth, where the contraption shook. Everything else seemed to be valves and circles, reflecting, distorting each other in the flabby light.

"I saw ya' watchin' me outside an' by the coffin. An' the guy who was standin' near ya' inside is the only guy besides you, includin' the payin' customers, who *believes* this stuff is real. An the i-yony of that is he's *part* a' the carnival."

"What's his name?" Alma asked.

"Elmer Groble. He's the fire-eater. His trouble is that he can *really* do it—eat fire, I mean. So he thinks that everythin' is on the square here. Oh, sure, ChubChub Charlene *is* pretty fat but that don't stop 'em from stuffin' her with saw-dust pillows before her performance. An' Alfie: so he's got rough skin; but he wears san'paper an' covers it with varnish an' green paint that raises an' lowers it for texture, an' they ask the customers to contribute somethin' extra for his *treatments*. An' Elmer's never seen Anita the Headless Girl without her headless apparatus. He comes an' watches me in the coffin every act. I tell ya' he *worries* for *me*."

The headless girl was all rigged out now. "Oh, by the way, pleased ta meet ya'. I'm Hulga, the Headless Girl." She snorted.

"No, you're Hulga, the thin-boned girl," Alma replied. I'm Alma Caterworster. My mother is-or-was a gypsy and my father is an eggcandler."

"Where are they now?"

"Sinning," Alma answered.

Hulga indicated no surprise. "Wanna' work here?" she asked.

"I want to be a lure-in, like you."

"No openin's. Aw, don't feel bad. Ya' can work outside the Public Toilets prob'ly. Old Leavious Throop can use someone pretty who can count for makin' change. Tell her

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Hulga sent ya'. Hulga: Anita the Headless Girl. At least ya' know *they* know what they're in for, goin' in the public toilets."

"I don't think I'd care to do that type of work."

"Well, go and see Leavious anyway. She may know of somethin'. Whatcha' starin' at? My tattoo? Well, don't ya' go believin' it happened that way. I had my choice of rhymes. That was the cutest. Oh I don't mean ta' say that I ain't been the former two on numerous occasions. But not the night I was tattooed. I *felt* all the pain. Ya' know who done the tattooin'? Iggy near Professor Bestwicke. He's got lotsa' combinations: 'Crocked-knocked-pocked,' 'Potted–shodded-soldered,' 'Slammed-jambed-damned'—dozens of 'em. Didn't charge me for the attractive tattoo either; said it was good publicity. So ya' might say I had it done on the cuff."

"When does Elmer Groble eat fire?"

Hulga listed afternoon hours. "Then we all have a dinner break for two hours."

"What is his evening schedule?" asked Alma.

"Say, ya' really interested in that naive guy?"

Alma looked away and shivered.

"*When* are his evening performances?"

Hulga gave them, quite willingly. "And at 11:30 the Carnival Of Amazin' shuts down an' all the freaks leave, tryin' to hide their freakishness."

"Do they succeed?"

"Sure—they just take the subway to wherever it is that they're goin'."

(Alma thought of her mother and smiled. She had loved being stared at and the trips to and from her location were the most rewarding times of the day for her. And even though Zinnia was an eccentric rather than a freak, people laugh at both for the same reason. Alma wished she knew what that reason was.)

"If ya' ask me, the freak with the most ta' hide is Elmer. Can ya' imagine what *else* he must believe in?! He must believe in God, the home, the family and the car."

"Hulga, what do you know about Elmer before he came here?"

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"All I know is before he came ta' Carnival Of Amazin' he was with Palace A. Wonders fer a long time. He had a knife-throwing act there with a partner, some broad named Deirdre. They say he never touched her—with a knife er anythin' else. Anyway, that's all anyone here knows about him."

"Thanks," said Alma. "I think that now I'd better go and see Leavious."

"She won't be able ta' tell ya' any more than that," added Hulga.

IV

"Jesus danced a tango, Jesus even rocked, Jesus never faltered 'Til his hands were locked. Jesus danced a rhumba, Jesus even swayed, Jesus never stumbled 'Til his feet were bled. Jesus danced with Mary, Jesus danced with Paul, Blessed the Twelve Apostles At a fancy dress ball. Jesus danced a polka, Danced a few gavottes, Preachin' out his gospel 'Til the nails formed clots."

Leavious Throop sat and sang by the Public Toilets. Nobody at all came over. She fanned herself with a bag of change.

Professor Bestwicke's neon sign was already lit. He had had no clients for the better part of the afternoon. His french doors were open, all his astrological lamps were lit, his enormous street sign, "THERE IS A SKEPTIC BORN EVERY MINUTE," was prominently displayed.

But the sun was setting and for the moment everyone in Coney Island needed no one. Except Professor Bestwicke. He came forward and out through the space provided by his french doors, and over to Leavious.

"Good evuhnin' Leavious."

Leavious spat. "Now see here, 'Professor' Bestwicke, if we are goin' to engage in conversation you will have to understand that I know you is a fake and you must get rid of that bogus Southern accent. I don't intend to tell everyone who passes but I expect you to stop all this nonsense when you is talkin' to *me*.."

"I am not a *fake*—my stars tell me that I am not a fake." There was no trace of anything except indignation in his voice.

Leavious laughed. Alma was approaching her as the at-

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tendant's cheek buds began to vibrate. Leavious felt them immediately and almost laughed again. But she distantly feared they would die if she laughed again. Leavious was superstitious. She would often walk on a sunless street to avoid her shadow. And the fact that the Public Toilets were in the shade had convinced her to remain there all this time. At the next moment she was greeting Alma, who had recited her credentials. Leavious noticed Bestwicke eyeing Alma and finally Alma noticed too. (Would this man have been even *humored* in a world of human beings, Alma wondered.)

When it became clear to Bestwicke that Alma was in need of a job he immediately offered to hire her as his secretary and receptionist. Leavious looked suddenly ominous. She had the capacity to reflect exactly the pervasive quality of most given human exchanges. Alma certainly distrusted Bestwicke but she saw the french doors of his Astrology Gallery and was attracted by them. She made Bestwicke put her as close to them as was feasible.

So Alma set herself up in Bestwicke's place, and her desk was located right where the french doors parted. She soon became used to Bestwicke's lack of business and sometimes wondered how he would be able to pay her salary. Often she would go and talk with Leavious, who never failed to find her mystifying for being able to sit with Bestwicke in his Astrology Gallery. Alma explained to her that it was a form of replenishment. "And besides, I am not within easy reach of his hands. Sometimes the distance prevents me from feeling his eyes on me."

Alma's only other, and much greater, resource, was Elmer. During the first few weeks with Bestwicke she had discovered just when she could take time off without his suspecting. Bestwicke himself often would become visibly discouraged with the fact of his small clientele. So he would raise both hands alternately, equally high for an equal moment, and pass by Alma's desk and out through his famous french doors. He would usually visit nearby amusements or go and talk to a vendor, and would return to tell her of his adventures. Once a vendor had suggested that Bestwicke

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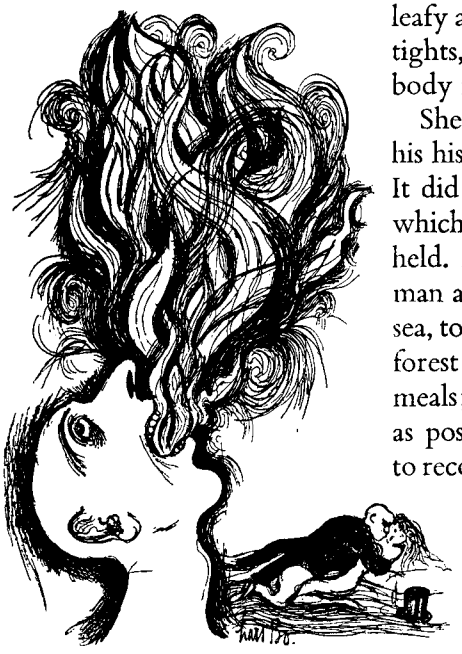
join the Carnival Of Amazing. The astrologer had reported this to Alma with what appeared to be deep fury, but she laughed and said that he was neither amazing nor a good risk. His face remained pomegranate and nothing in his manner suggested that he knew that she knew better. She suspected that he had begun to believe in himself.

But these excursions of Bestwicke's gave Alma time to visit Elmer and to watch his performance. He came gradually to notice her and even to look for her in the congregation. She did not disappoint him very often. Once, while he ate his flame, he directed some drippings of it towards Alma. He knew they would not hurt her; they were sent with such purity of wish, and for a second as they were on his way to her Alma knew also that they would not hurt her. Yet Hulga had to apply butter from a hot corn vendor and a scar remained on Alma's neck.

The two of them spent much time together, sometimes with Hulga, usually alone. The first time they kissed Alma was frightened to touch this fire-eater's mouth. But it was as if the mouth had emerged deep and leafy and gratifying from under his white tights, where he still kept the rest of his body from her.



She talked to Elmer about himself, but his history did not seem to uncover him. It did not hold for Alma the excitement which any fraction of his present life held. He was the son of a lobster fisherman and he had grown up to dislike the sea, to fear it. He would go off into the forest and build fires, camp out, cook meals; he would bend his head as close as possible to the flames in futile attempts to recognize the scenic elements of which they were composed. Once, desperate to discover, he thrust a flaming piece of wood into his mouth. He discovered only that he could eat fire... Knowing this,

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he now made of the sea of and New England active enemies. He could stay near the sea no longer and so he left Maine. For a time he simply worked with the earth, on farms in Pennsylvania and Ohio. But he wanted to work with fire, not fire that was used to make something else: *pure fire*. He drifted into the ranks of a small touring carnival in Ohio, but it disbanded soon afterwards. One of the performers in the troupe who had befriended Elmer told him of the opportunity in Coney Island. Elmer had joined the Palace of Wonders because it had been opposite a torpidly glowing electric sign saying "FASCINATION." But he had been lured to Carnival Of Amazing by a new electrified blazing carrousel across the avenue. Everyone at the Carnival soon became his friend although some regarded him as a freak; he was such an *enthusiastic* fire-eater.

Alma would talk to him of Leavious and of Bestwicke and of what a fake Bestwicke was. Elmer once replied, with obviously deep concern: "But he works with the stars. How can a man who works with the stars not discover some of the truths with which he works?"

One afternoon, a long time after she had first begun working as Bestwicke's receptionist, Alma received a blatantly pregnant woman. The client seemed surprised to see a receptionist there but Alma thought she had reassured the woman somewhat by taking her name (Miss Trixie Moss), age (undetermined), and occupation (likewise). Bestwicke made a point never to ask where his clients lived. She gave her copies of *Professor Bestwicke's Astrological Chart* and *Professor Bestwicke's Maxims For the Skeptic And Reinforcements For The True Believer*. The woman giggled softly and then snickered. She approached Professor Bestwicke's desk in the very rear of the gallery and waited, morosely, snickeringly, even accusingly, as he put on his glasses. There was a pause, during which all the star-pummeled destinies in the dusty shop seemed to be embedded in granite. Bestwicke greeted her politely (but not greasily, as Alma had come to expect from him). Then their voices exchanged inaudible labial conversation for some minutes. And then, quickly, catching Alma unguarded, Bestwicke boomed out, "You needn't

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worry, my dear. You're very fortunate: your horoscope shows that the child will be born dead. A mighty fortress is our God, especially when he has Taurus to protect him." He was not using his southern drawl as he did with all his other clients. Alma heard the sound of Bestwicke's slap of encouragement to the woman and she hoped that he had not slapped her on the stomach in his renewal of non-belief.

V

Once, after having left the premises in a coughing spewing rage, Bestwicke returned to his Astrology Gallery before Alma. He had been horribly insulted again, so horribly that he would not tell Leavious what had been said or who had said it. But he demanded to know where Alma had gone. Leavious, frightened of his rage, did not attempt to chide him about the woman whom she had seen enter his Astrology world that afternoon—and many times before. She suggested, also in fear, that Bestwicke should seek Alma at the Carnival Of Amazing.

And indeed Bestwicke did find Alma there. It was getting on towards evening and the people were few, although only half-visible. Alma was standing very close to Elmer. He was eating his fire and it illumined Alma's face. Bestwicke came swiftly, ragingly, over to her, and dragged her powerfully from her place. Elmer could see her becoming larger and larger as she shadowed across the small room, but all he could do was to continue to eat his fire.

Bestwicke kept a firm grip on Alma all the way back to his gallery, through the amusement lights and the haggard groups of people. He kept mumbling "A fireeater, wants a fireeater, hot for a *fire*eater! Ha!" Alma could not break from his grasp. When they approached the sign on "There is a skeptic born every minute" Alma searched for Leavious near the Public Toilets but she could not find her. Bestwicke pulled Alma inside through the french doors, closed them completely, and turned on his neon sign.

"A fireeater, huh? Ha! Well, here's *me*! I eat *stars*! Don't you want a *star*eater, huh?!" He did not turn on the lights in

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the gallery and he still held tight to Alma. Suddenly he broke his own grip and put his arms tightly about her. "I eat *stars*!" he screamed and closed her body out of the light. He was almost smothering her, was almost dead weight. She dragged both of their silent bodies to the neon light switch and began turning it on and off incoherently. She could not scream in answer. Bestwicke seemed to revive from the blinking of the lights, and with all of his weight still resting upon her he attacked her with small eagles of frenzy. "A fireeater!" he shouted. "And now a *star*eater as well!" He began to sing in a soft hoarse voice but with strength and a mad nostalgia: *D is for their Dedicated bodies, O is for their Orifices wide, X is for their Xylophonic structures, I is for their Indigo insides.*" He was now on top of her, obliterating everything but her hair. And through it all, through his non-belief, through *her* non-belief, through this strange pyre, he sang: "*E is for their Elegiac natures, S is for their Semenal delights, Put them all together they spell Dah-ah-ahx-ies, Those devastating dainty sprites, Put them all together they spell Dah-ah-ahx-ies Those devasta-ting dain-ty sprites*! Alma could see only Elmer, eating his fire, never *her* fire, no longer hers. Then she saw her father, lighting a candle with Elmer's fire. She dizzied...

When Alma felt Bestwicke collapse over her, she rolled him off her thighs and opened the french doors. She stood in the night air and realized that many hours had passed. Leavious did not seem to be anywhere outside. The street was empty. All the lights were extinguished. Only Professor Bestwicke's neon light was still lit. She turned the switch. She walked back over to where he lay and watched him sleeping. She turned him over on his back, as she would a playful ladybug, tucked in his shirt, zipped his trousers, and did not hate him. For a while she simply walked on the beach. Then she thought of Elmer. She knew he must be looking for her but she did not change her pace or her direction.

Then she thought of something else. She started to run but could not keep it up for a long spell. She slowed down and then ran once more. At last she was back in the street of the Public Toilets. She came to the building she wanted.

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She banged and banged on the door but Iggy did not answer. After a few moments she ran round to the back entrance. There was a train approaching on the tracks overhead and the back door rattled so she could hardly see to bang against it and the banging, she was sure, could hardly be heard. When at last Iggy came to the door the train had passed and she was still shaking. But her eyes were glassy and her face appeared calm and deliberate.

"Iggy, I want you to tattoo me," she said steadily.

The fat little man in his soiled fossil-patterned pajamas seemed alarmed.

"But Miss, it's very late—it—it must be after three. And I don't know that I can hold the needle sturdy." And, as a futile effort, "Why don't you come back tomorrow?".....

"I want it right now Iggy," Alma, glassy-eyed and forceful, insisted. "I'll guide your hand."

...She pushed Iggy inside (it struck her that she did so in much the same way that Bestwicke had handled her in the earlier pantomime), turned on his lamp for him, and lifted her dress. She took his hand and placed it instructively on her left thigh. Her loins still writhed.

"Now Iggy, I want the same words that Hulga has, but without the advertisement. I intend to pay for the job. But do it large and spell it right. With all *capital* letters."

Iggy nodded, blew his nose, erased his eyes, and awakened to the needle's task.

Alma emerged some time later into the terrible light of the street lamp. She saw Elmer some distance away with his back towards her. "Hey, fire-eater," she shouted tauntingly. Then she whispered "fire-eater" again as he turned and hurried at her. As he approached she raised her dress stunningly and let him read the message in the light.

He said nothing.

She continued to hold up her dress.

Then he wept.

She let her dress fall. She bent and picked up a small stone, threw it at the street lamp, but did not stand waiting to hear it strike. She wandered away, the tattoo firmly across her soul.

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A CONUNDRUM FOR THE BONE-COLLECTOR

All love is merely fear of apprehension.
You love the antic magician but fear his wand.
You ate an apple contrary to instruction.
Now there's a corpse in the pond.

Well, nothing matters. Therefore be austere.
Bitten, you ask, why not be bitten hard?
You've erred, and turned against the turning year.
Now there are bones in the yard.

What you cannot forget, you can ignore.
Your love is built on stone and for all time.
All love is sin or guilt, and what is more,
Flesh melts under lime.

The antic magus who foresaw your birth,
What does he augur now? you often ask.
There are some other things I could unearth.
There is the skull on your desk.

The seeds of the apple scatter everywhere.
The corpse in the pond will call on you some time.
Beware him. Of the three gifts he will bear,
One will be lime.

—ERROLL PRITCHARD

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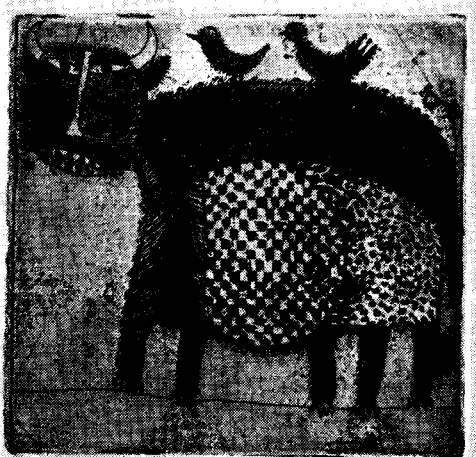

43/50 Corcoran

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Brigitte Coudrain

BRIGITTE COUDRAIN was born 26 years ago in Paris. She lives there still. In 1954, after completing her preliminary studies, she entered the *atelier-école* of the well-known engraver, Friedlaender. There she acquired that astonishing knowledge of the techniques of her art which is the mark of all Friedlaender's students. The limited selection of her work which follows does not, unfortunately, show the full range of her virtuosity with the medium. But what it does show—more perhaps than her dusky undulating landscapes or her fine figuring of strange plants in the colors and frailty of pressed flowers—is the distinctive quality of an imagination which has not been blurred by the gratuitous elaboration of a well-learned craft.

Since Madame de Pompadour, engraving has occasionally been practised by members of the "gentler" sex, but it is hardly a gentle art. The technique of inflicting tiny violences through wax on copper or zinc, then brushing acid into the wounds seems on the contrary, the supreme refinement of a delicate viciousness. Be that as it may, Brigitte Coudrain has created a collection of beasts and mythological bipeds whose disconcerting images betray the mordant process by which they were made. Animals with fur precisely combed and plucked, nudes whose dew-drop figures frame the sex, all these creatures seem etched with mild ironic acerbity. And yet these bizarre little figures transfixed at the moment of love or decision or some quixotic hunting, these horned cats (or are they cows with claws?) with riding birds like dainty parasites possess something of the guileless delight of the child who frightens herself with imagined terrors... then laughs.

N. W. A.

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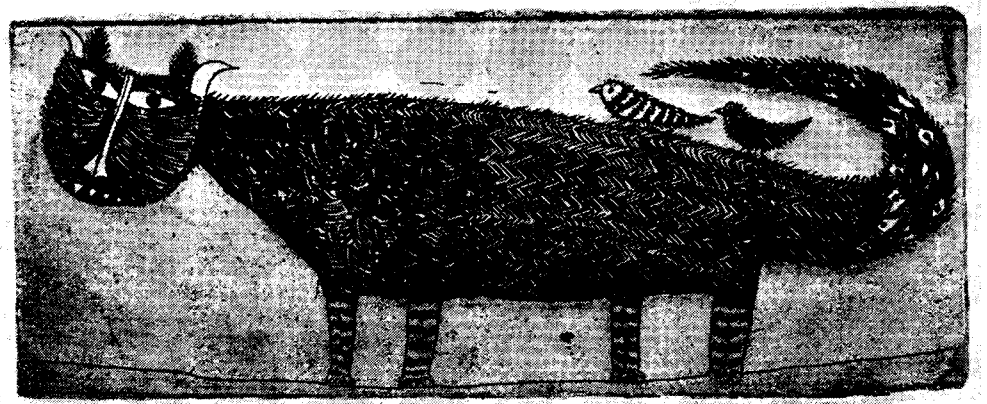

44/50

Coudrain

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50/50 Coudain

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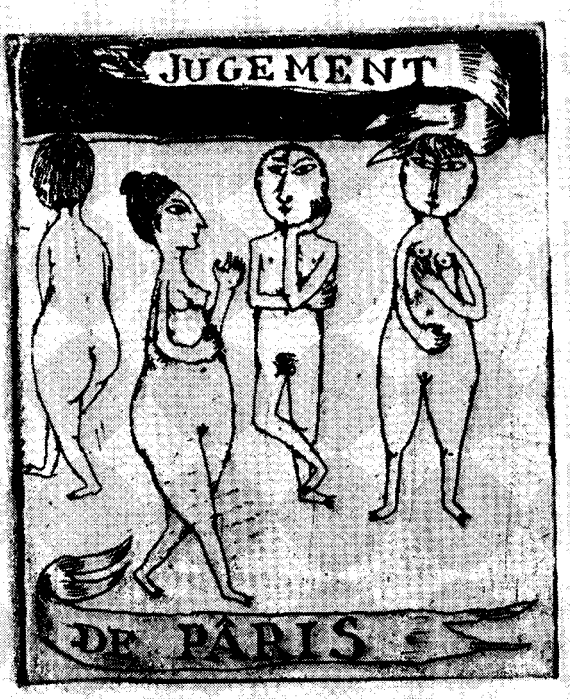

45/150 Cousin

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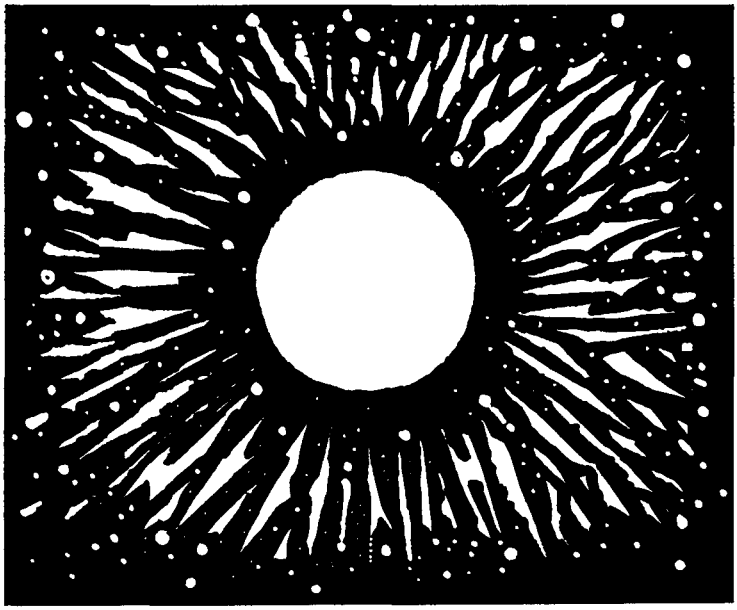

CECIL DAWKINS

The Buffalo Ranch

THE signs out front faced down the highway, lettered on both sides so they could be read from either direction, east or west. WESTERN CURIOS—INDIAN JEWELRY—GOOD GRADE GAS—CLEAN REST ROOMS—ICE WATER—FREE ZOO. One, confronting only the west-bound cars, warned LAST CHANCE. Across the roof, the name of the place in individual wooden letters, some of which the wind had knocked down to lie bleaching on the shingles. What was left read B F ALO R NCH.

The building, a long flat-roofed adobe structure, was flanked on the east by the Clean Rest Rooms and a tire rack, though the tires, New and Used, stood in precarious piles on the ground, and on the west by the buffalo pen, a solid fence of

Drawings by Avati

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upended poles which, along with the slits for viewing, suggested that the two dusty and ancient fleabitten cows, whatever their appearance, were really dangerous. Out front, two gasoline pumps like armless Indians guarded the stuffed grizzly and the pinto pony humped in the shape of its own rebellion and caught forever, like the mastodon in ice, before which tourists could have their pictures taken. To the north, at some distance across the desert, the mountains rose, first the yellow hills and, behind them, peaks blue in their own shadow.

The dark low-raftered interior, lined with Indian rugs and blankets imported from a factory in up-state New York, offered careless counters of turquoise or polished stone or petrified wood in silver—rings, buckles, bracelets, necklaces —a shelf of cochina dolls and felt moccasins, untidy stacks of "western" shirts and skirts, denim levis, cowboy hats, a row of Coca Cola machine, cigarette machine, chewing gum balls and peanut dispensers, piñon nuts, and peanut butter or cheese in stale cracker sandwiches—four to a cellophane pack, one nickle. Through the curtained door, the Free Zoo—a gila monster and a rattler in separate aquariums, one ragged cayote in a wire cage, an eagle and a road runner, both of these stuffed and dusty, with little agate eyes. In the three back rooms Jimmy lived with her husband, Burt the Trader, who was at this moment out behind the kitchen concentrating upon the lettering of two new signs, the tip of his tongue showing like a little pink bullet between his lips. He had already finished one of the signs and stood it up to dry against the adobe wall, where each letter was slowly developing a stinger. It read DON'T MISS THE ATOM BOMB. The other one, the one he labored over, said BIG BLAST SEE IT HERE.

In the morning, fresh from a night in some ranch-type motel, tourists stopped from both directions. They bought postcards and scribbled on them, and put them into purses where they would forget to mail them, bought turquoise rings and silver buckles, took their children through the Zoo, snapped pictures of each other fighting the grizzly or of Junior riding the bucking bronco, peered in at the languishing

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buffalos, and sampled piñon nuts while spreading maps on fenders, though the road was there, visible for miles in either direction, plainly offering but one choice, unless they wanted to go back where they came from.

But in the afternoon, the cars that stopped in their hurry toward some less lonesome spot before night, stopped only for gasoline if they were heading east, or for nose bags for their radiators if they were heading west into the desert.

Now it was almost night.

Jimmy was standing in the kitchen door, watching her husband work on the signs. She had long ago decided he was mad and the only thing to do was humor him.

She was twenty-two years old and looked to be fifteen, with an undersized body that was all bone. She had on one of her husband's shirts and a pair of pants stitched up the sides and around the pockets with thread that had once been white. Her yellow straw hair hung straight with an open-end square cut out of it for her face, long and sharp and green-eyed. Her name was really Jimel, after her father and mother, Jim and Elda, back in East Tennessee.

She had been seventeen years old when she married him. He'd told her he was going overseas and was sure to be killed. And then, he said, she would be rich. But she hadn't married him because of the insurance, though she did not at the time doubt that he would be killed if he said so. She had married him because he promised to take her to Florida on their honeymoon. She'd been a little disappointed in everything but the ocean.

In less than a year, he was back, but put in an army hospital. He wrote letters saying he'd got a spotty lung and would probably die. But again he didn't. When they released him, they said he would stay cured so long as he lived in some desert. So he'd left the hospital and got on a bus and headed west to find himself a desert, and he'd found The Buffalo Ranch and sent for her. By then, she couldn't remember exactly what he looked like.

When she got off the bus, she was looking for a short, pale-haired fellow in a damp uniform. But it was a little man

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in cowboy boots and hat, wearing levis and a bright fuchsia corrugated nylon shirt, that grabbed her, kissing. He'd worn the cowboy hat indoors and out, even while he stepped out of his pants at night to go to bed. But she soon discovered anyway that, except for the fringe around the edges and a soft yellow down on top, he'd turned bald as an infant.

For awhile he entertained her with stories about his experiences in the armed forces. He told her about going out on patrols in no-man's land, and about the stink of dead bodies, and about a crazy Chinese radio that blared out propaganda to them at night and played American jazz music on what sounded like kitchen utensils. And he told her about Japanese women when he was on leave, making out that he'd been quite a heller. But then she was wakened one night by his sobs and he confessed that he'd never seen a Chinese soldier, never been on patrol, that the only stink he'd come in contact with was in the latrines. He'd spent his months in Korea with a reserve battalion near a place he called Sayool, and that was where they discovered his spotty lung. From then on he'd been in the hospital. The two letters he'd written to her were full of nothing but lies.

After that, she got to know him better because he talked about what was really on his mind. He talked about his death. His death was like a ribbon-tied box he kept in front of him all the time. He didn't know what was in it for him and he wouldn't have dared to touch the ribbon. But nevertheless he kept it always before him, at arm's length, where he could look at it and talk about it and be reminded by it that he was set apart from other men. It was his obsession, that and making money. He said he hadn't long to live and he wanted to make a lot of money before he died.

Squatting before his sign, Burt asked, "What do you think? Is two enough?"

Jimmy didn't answer. She was thinking about the ocean. Though she had seen it only on that one occasion in her life, she found it was a good deal more real to her than anything she remembered from East Tennessee. (Mountains made her car sick.) She had found that looking at the desert made it

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easier for her to conjure up the ocean, a thing she was likely to do in time of stress. She thought it helped to look at the desert because it was just so much nothing and didn't intrude upon her mind. So, standing there at the back door, she looked out across the arroyo and the sand flats to the mesa and, beyond, the mountains, and the ocean suddenly loomed up, blue with white sand beaches, seeming to rise toward the distances, so big it was like something you try to get your hands on in a dream. Her eyes glazed over with the look of one hypnotized, or dead. It made her feel the way she had upon inhaling her first cigarette as a child, full and light-headed and gone from this world.

It lasted only an instant, and afterwards there was only the arroyo where rested the wind-sanded, rusting-out carcass of the old wreck Burt had pushed down there with his jeep, and clumps of mesquite, and a distant butte that looked like a man buried in sand up to his neck, and the desert itself that remained to mock her, a gross personal insult.

She turned her eyes back upon her husband. "Sometimes I think you hadn't got a lick of sense," she said.

He smiled up at her and went on with his work. He had finished both signs and now was getting ready to nail them onto posts. "You want to help me with this now?" he asked. "I got to get busy on them sun glasses. There's a world of things to be done yet."

He stood up and took off his hat and fanned himself. She slammed out into the yard and took hold of one of the sign posts. She looked at his bald head. She hadn't often an opportunity to see it. The ridge the hat made cut across his forehead like a scar. Above it his head was unnaturally white, while below, his nose and cheeks were peeling and red and his eyebrows and lashes were bleached. His taking off his hat was a testimonial to his excitement.

"What are you going to do with the sun glasses?" she asked, still studying the scar the hat made. He'd come home that morning from a quick trip up the highway and into the nearest town, loaded down with cardboard boxes stuffed full of 29¢ and 59¢ and 69¢ sun glasses. He'd bought out every

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drugstore and dime store and trading post for twenty miles to the east.

"I aim to put a $1 in front of each and every one of those prices," he said.

"They probly won't even need them to see it," she said.

"Well, they won't *know* that till it's all over," he said. "By then I'll have made a fortune." He picked up his hammer and began to drive the nails while she braced her shoulder against the back of the post. He'd made lots of fortunes before. Once he'd made Julia Crow, their Indian help, take him out into the desert. He'd taken hundreds of color slides of buttes and cactus and one old Indian ruin. He'd sold one of the pictures to a postcard company. And once he'd bought six burros, planning to take pack trips out toward the mountains, charging tourists some outrageous price. He never could make a go of that though, and he blamed it on the fact they didn't have a motel where tourists could stay and get an early start in the mornings. So he'd built a ring and hired out the burros for kiddy rides until they all got choked one spring in a sand storm.

Every blow of the hammer knocked her teeth together. "Hurry up, will you please," she said. "It'll be here by the time you get these things up."

"Hold your horses. I'm almost through."

Whack, and she felt a crick coming in her neck. But he'd finished.

He picked up his mallet and leaned on it to survey his handiwork. "In the morning," he said, "I expect to see cars lining as far as you can see on both sides of the highway."

"How do you know so sure you'll even be able to see it from here?" she asked. But he ignored her.

"Dropped two on Japan and they flattened a city apiece." He snapped his fingers. "Just like that." Now he had stuck the handle of the mallet into the sand and was sitting on its head, rolling a smoke.

He started to go on, but his eyes shifted and he looked down at what he was doing. She saw that he'd been about to describe the cities as if he'd seen both of them. She knew

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that frequently he could have kicked himself for confessing to her about his war experiences that night he woke up dreaming about his birthday box of death.

He went on, "Millions of 'em, dead before they knew what hit um, cinders in a second." He stuck the cigarette between his lips and searched his pockets for a match to light it. "You take, most of them, why they'd never even thought about it." Snap. "Out like a light. None of your little cross-roads bus stops either, big cities the size of L.A." Snap.

Jimmy balanced the sign and tried to wipe a smear of paint off her temple.

He shook his head, smiling a little. "You couldn't of paid me to been in one of them."

"When I die I want it to be quick," she said.

"Take I read where they dropped one of them on this island. They were just trying it out. Put all these sheep and goats in crates and left um there to see what effect it would have. Why, baby, when it was all over, know what? There wasn't even an island. That's wat effect it had." He laughed. "Sometimes they don't get it set just like they want it."

Julia Crow waddled around the end of the buffalo pen to see what they were doing. Julia Crow came once a week, bringing moccasins and cochina dolls off the reservation. And she stayed the day to clean up and cook supper for them. For this, Burt paid her two dollars over the price of her wares, most of which he shipped east at a 500 % profit to his brother who ran a trading post in the Smoky Mountains, where the "Navaho Handicraft" was re-labeled "Cherokee Curios" and sold along with chenille bedspreads. She was a fat dark Indian woman with little eyes like raisins in a burnt roll, and she had come that morning waddling out of the desert with two sacks of souvenirs tied into the ends of her shawl and slung forward over her shoulders to form a pair of breasts in no way out of proportion to the rest of her. In the course of the morning, posed between the stuffed grizzly and the pinto pony, she had contrived to have her picture taken many times. She always posed with arms crossed under her shawl, grim faced, her large lips stretched to cover her

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larger teeth, but she broke into helpless giggles afterwards, holding out her palm. At this, the tourists were likely to look hurt or to doubt Julia's authenticity. Half of the tourists came determined to believe everything. The other half were just as determined to believe nothing and they picked over the items for sale, murmuring "Made in Japan."

Burt had talked Julia Crow into staying and helping out with the mob he expected to converge upon The Buffalo Ranch before dawn. Now as she waddled up to them, he let the cigarette dangle from the corner of his lips and trail a thread of smoke that made his right eye water. The sight of Julia Crow had somewhat the same settling effect on him that the vision of the ocean had on his wife. He studied her with a fixed and distant look, for she was the one Indian they had gotten on terms with and he felt that there was something to be done with her, if he could just think what. The fact that she was alive increased her value, but at the same time made her uses difficult to settle on. But far from being frustrated by the challenge she represented, each time he looked at her he was kindled to dreams out of all proportion to the Free Zoo and the buffalo pen. Some day it would come to him. In the meantime, he encouraged her visits and treated her with deference.

"Whadaya think, Julia?" he asked. "Whadaya think will happen when the bomb goes off?" Her silence fascinated him and led him to believe that if he could but get her to talk the revelation he was after might spring balloon-shaped from her lips. So he was forever asking her foolish questions.

"Make a boom-boom," she said, with a grin that squeezed the raisin-eyes almost out of sight.

He gazed at her, letting the words settle like rolling dice so he could read them and sift their meaning.

"What do *you* think is going to happen?" Jimmy asked, a suspicion worrying gnat-like at her consciousness.

He laughed. "I think we going to make us a killing."

Julia Crow chuckled and Burt's eyes jumped to her face. "Ain't that right, Julia."

"Big killing," she agreed.

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"You think," Jimmy said, speaking as she might have, hypnotized, "you think maybe they won't get it set just right in the morning, don't you. You think we might all of us get blown sky-high. You plan on selling all those sun glasses at 300% profit to a bunch of people without long on this earth, don't you. And that's how come you're laughing under your hat, idn't it."

He chuckled. "Whadaya think, Julia? We going to get blown up or what?"

Julia Crow raised her arms slowly into a circle and pursed her lips. "Posh!" she said.

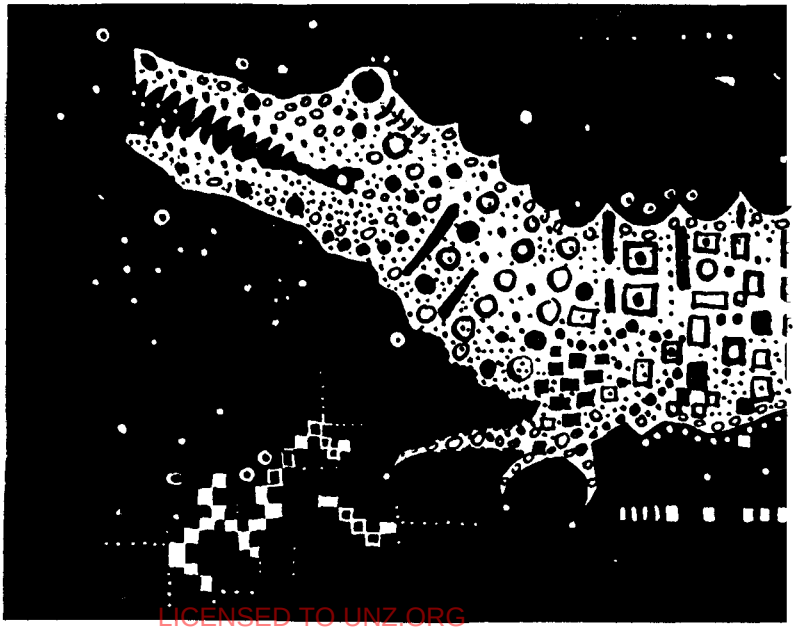
Burt was visibly shaken. The cigarette trembled in his lips and he didn't take his eyes off her.

Jimmy let go the sign and it arked over to slap the ground and send up a little spurt of alkali. "Listen. If there's a chance in a million that'll happen I'm high-tailing it out of here."

"Now cahm down," Burt said. "Just cahm down. I'm going to need me all the help I can get here in the morning. Anyway," he dropped the cigarette and put his foot on it, "they know what they're doing."

"They blew up that island without meaning to."

"They had more experience at it now."



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Julia Crow giggled, looking from one of them to the other, folding her arms underneath her shawl.

Burt rolled another cigarette, licked it sealed with a flamboyant swipe of his tongue, stuck it in his mouth and searched his pockets again for a match. "What if they did?" he said. "And we got buried in the sand from it and they dug us up two thou'd'n years from now. Take they found this place just like it is tonight and you and me and Julia," he turned his mystical white gaze upon the Indian, "you and me and Julia all mummified to a fare-you-well."

"You said they went up in cinders," Jimmy said.

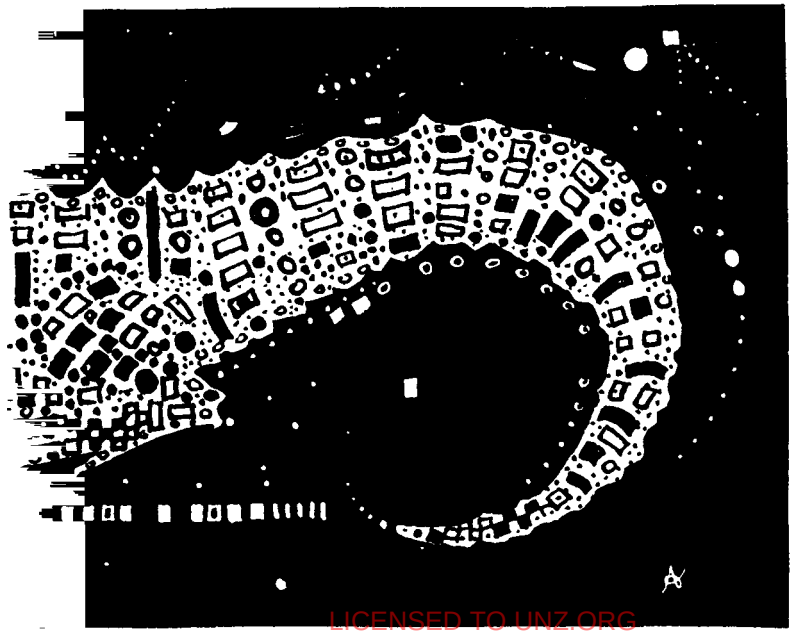
He shrugged, lighting his match, "Happens all kind of ways."

"Shoot," Jimmy said, "If you thought that was what was going to happen you'd hitch a ride out of here on a motorcycle and we'd of seen the last of you."

"Whadaya think, Julia?" he asked.

Julia Crow shook like Santy Claus, chuckling silently in her wisdom.

In the desert at night the stars hang low, suspended from a bent black sky, like Christmas baubles in a fir, just out of



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reach. And people and the walls they build around small spaces seem shrunken from their due proportions, the lighted ceiling of air and walls of mountains like sleeping dinosaurs. And there are no anachronisms unless time itself is upside-down and man awakes and squints and lifts his meager self from tomb and pyramid to find the earth no longer his.

But a lecturer at the Grand Canyon said take this ditch and imagine on its rim a needle standing on its head, and take this to be a picture of the history of earth, and the needle is the history of man, infinitesimal upon the ages.

And Jimmy had wandered to the edge to see how far down she could spit. Not far, for the wind took the spittle, whipped it to feathered foam, and dispersed it in the air. The river at the bottom was a metallic thread, too thin to have sawed away all this, no mightier than the needle standing on its head and meant to be a man. She didn't for a minute believe that pitch.

And then the Indians in fancy costumes had danced on a stage the size of a drum. She'd thought of Julia Crow and spit again.

II

Now cars were beginning to spread out along the shoulders of the highway and into the desert itself, their headlights criss-crossed ribbons on the sand. It was three hours past midnight. Burt was doing a lively trade in trinkets out front. Cochina dolls and Coca Colas went like hotcakes, and voices melted into pools inside the Zoo where the sleepy cayote circled in his cage and the rattler bruised his forked tongue against the glass and the eagle's agate eyes looked haughtily out across the sea of heads. And Julia Crow smiled and smiled and spoke no Englis, except to make change.

Jimmy wandered out of the trading post, past the buffalo pen where one restive cow mounted the other, and into the dip of the arroyo where she almost stepped on a pair of lovers wrestling in the sand. She turned and wandered toward the butte.

A pick-up truck had parked with its nose toward the moun-

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tains, and a woman sitting in the cab spoke to her. "Honey, kin I trouble you for a light?"

Jimmy stopped, searched the pockets of her pants, and came up with a wooden kitchen match. She stroked it on the rusted hood and held it toward the woman. In its flare she saw a man sprawled against the far door, asleep, with his hat mashed against the back of the seat, and a woman as old as her mother giving suck to a wrinkled elderly-looking baby.

She held the match to the cigarette drooping from the woman's mouth, and the woman, like the infant, sucked away.

"Thanks a lot, honey. What time's it getting to be?"

Jimmy shrugged and walked on, parallel now to the highway, through the populated desert. A circle of Indian men gambled with dice in the bed of a truck, throwing the bones against the backboard, snapping fingers, and cursing, "Hot damn, Little Joe. Sweet Jesus!"

"It is my feeling," she heard a man say to a small group of people gathered around the hood of a station wagon like a family at dinner, "that we have crossed this country to find only another ocean. No frontiers are left to us and here we are, beached on the desert with no place left to go, unless it's up and we explore the universe itself."

"Go up in smoke!" a second man said.

The first man, a black silhouette with only its face illuminated, nodded. "That may be," he said. "It's a chance we have to take."

Another one said softly, "There is the soul. Always the soul that will be there waiting, its mystery unsolved, when all the worlds are known and all the beasts put down."

The second man said, "It's a bomb, not a space ship."

And they thought about that.

She moved away.

All the cars had their radios going, and the voice of the radio explaining what would happen sounded like that of a solemn priest putting out exciting things in a language no one could understand anymore. Everywhere she went the

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same low sexless voice was there ahead of her, making it seem as though she stood still, going no place.

A man said to a woman, "The way I look at it, we *got* this thing. How come they want to outlaw it? It's all killing. Might just as well be expert about it. The trouble with them is they think it's a game you play by a set of rules. They make up rules and set up men like checkers on a board, different colors and you can't jump backwards and all that. But this thing! It's too big to play with. It'd ruin their game. That's how come they want to outlaw it."

"I don't follow you," the woman said. "Women just don't understand the way you men think."

"Balls," Jimmy said. They turned to look at her, and she walked away.

Two students were down on their knees in the blare of headlights. One had a stick and was drawing in the sand. "Now here's the structure of the uranium atom," he said. "And the bombardment works—wait a minute. Now look at this, will you—"

A girl in horn-rimmed glasses said to the slender young man sitting on the blanket beside her, "What a story! I think this will sell. Listen." She raised a hand as if visualizing or drawing in the air the scene she described. "The world's just heard the news—the bomb's been outlawed, stock piles all destroyed, disarmament has begun. Everything's at fever pitch. People jubilant. Parades in every street. Like the Elizabethans. Start at some peak of perfection and there's no place to go but down. Here's the gimmick. *Marvelous* irony. Comes the dawn. It's all *too late*. Scientists discover that radiation has already gone beyond the limit. Ta-da. Music. Quick contrast. People weeping. Dejected. The whole world's been sterilized, see. Get in a Biblical twist. That's always good. First the fishes die off, then the fowl, etcetera. Mankind's only hope for survival lies in the possibility that the embryos in the wombs all over the world might still be potent. All the women in a family way become the property of the state and have to go to hospitals underground to insure every precaution against radiation.

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"Look at the possibilities for vignettes! Terrific pathos. Families torn up. Young couples separated. Say they won't be able to tell until the children reach the age of puberty. I'd have to do a little research. But look at the angles! Economy. What happens there while the world waits? Baby foods manufacturers going out of business, advertising affected etcetera. Education! Kindergartens closing down in a few years, then no first grades and so on. No grade schools. Then no high schools. The whole world at a standstill, waiting. Everything focused on the caves where the new generation is being reared. Get the picture? It's *loaded* with symbols. It's like going back to the beginning, back to the cave men, see. How do they teach these children? What do their little text books talk about? Trees? They've never seen a tree. Animals? They've all died off. Everyone's a vegetarian. And morals! What happens to morals?"

The young man threw himself into it, stretching out his long legs onto the sand and leaning on one elbow. "I think the morals should go to pot. Interesting. Would sex really become meaningless? It would raise questions. Anyway," he laughed. "you could use it to advantage. Juice it up a bit. Make it sell. The whole world in an orgy of escapism!"

"Terrific! And mankind in the balance, looking toward a generation of children growing up like moles in caves. What kind of civilization would they make, I wonder?"

"After the orgy, I suspect there'd be a religious revival," he said.

"That would be a gimmick. Get in some intellectual content. And I think it might just end like the lady and the tiger. People on their knees in the streets, waiting to hear loud speakers announce the results of the tests on the children. Waiting to hear if mankind has a future!"

"Curtain! I think you've really got something there. Maybe a best seller."

"I don't know," she said, sighing. "It might be a pot boiler. My natural indolence may keep it from being great."

And together, in silence, they contemplated the awful reality of her natural indolence.

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Jimmy came to a spot dark and clear of cars. She squatted on her heels and looked toward the mountains, wondering what time it was. She yawned. She intended to sleep all day when it was over, and Burt could go hang himself for all she cared. She sat in the sand and took a Hershey bar out of her pocket and peeled back the paper like the skin of a banana.

A voice close to her said, "Repent, Madam, while yet there's time." It was a voice with a lot of breath in it.

She sat perfectly still, looking straight ahead of her into the dark.

Then on feet that fell soundlessly on the sand, a form moved close to her. She turned. A man in outline darker than the night stood towering over her. He let himself down, carefully, as though his bones were dry and brittle things, and he knelt on the ground and put his hands together like a child praying. A car turned off the highway, and before its lights went out she saw his face, gaunt and boney like a death head, shaggy-haired like some desert wolf.

"I will pray with you," he said.

She held the peeled chocolate while it began to go soft in her fingers. "Who ast you to?" she said.

"You do not have to ask."

"Who d'you think you are?"

"I am the Christ."

"Yeah, I thought so," she said. "I'm Mary. Please-to-meetcha."

He gasped and put his face up close to hers until she had to move back from his stinking breath. She didn't smell any liquor on him though. "Do not blaspheme," he said, "now and in this hour of our death. Come. Let us pray."

"G'wan, pray if you want to but leave me alone."

"Alone—alone. Has it occurred to you, Madam, that I could not do otherwise, that we are all irrevocably alone here as on a darkling plain and it is the cross we must bear? Alone." He grabbed her hand and folded it against his chest. "Ay, there's the rub. But look! Isn't it also our human bond? Alone. It is the thing we all of us have in common, that makes us brethren, one with another."

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She turned cautiously to see how far out alone she'd come. The Buffalo Ranch shone luminous as a fallen star where Burt had turned on the fluorescent lights over the gas pumps.

"Come," he said gently. "Let us pray. There is not a great deal of time." He held her hand between his own and lifted his head to lay it on the wind. His straggly little goatee fluttered like a tail on a radiator.

"Prayer," he began, "I have lived my life and that which I have done may he within himself make pure—"

"What've you done?" she whispered, the hand in his gone numb.

"But thou, if thou shouldst never see my face again—"

"Jesus!" she whispered. "I hope I never."

She drew her hand little by little from those of the madman and rolled up on her knees like a football player on the line, her chocklaty hand gathering sand like a tide-deserted anemone. Then she shot up. At the length of her coattail, she jerked, poised a second, and plopped hard. He had hold of her clothes.

"I am the hound of heaven," he said. "Listen!"

She wasn't breathing, and her lungs were swollen like a balloon about to burst.

"Now pray with me," he said.

"O.K., O.K. I'll pray with you." She crouched, looking now toward the highway where a car eased off the ribbon, dipped, and showered the two of them with light as it crept out over the sand.

He had her wrist in the iron ring of his fingers. "What shall we pray, Sister?"

"Anything. You choose." The car would reach them in a moment, if it didn't stop first.

"All right," he said. "Say after me 'I repent me—"

"I repent me—"

"Say 'Oh my God I am heartily sorry for all my sins because I dread the loss of heaven and the pains of hell, but most of all because they offend Thee—"

But he'd let go of her and fallen over to beat his head on the ground.

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The car was getting close now. She felt safe. She leaned over the crazy man and saw that he wore a black suit that was threadbare and shiny.

"Listen, get on up. They like to run over you."

His muttering continued. He acted as if he no longer knew that she was there.

Now the cars had turned off their headlights and looked like black ants sudden-died there on a flattened hill where some giant had stepped. In the east she saw a candle's glow, faint from under the horizon. People had climbed out of cars and trucks to stand together, silent now, looking toward the mountains over whose summit they expected to see the second coming of the sun. There was no traffic on the highway now, no movement anywhere, and not a sound from the crowd behind them. The wind had died and she realized it was dawn. In the silence the voice of the radio said "Five—four—three—two—"

She poked the lunatic's shoulder with her finger. "Get up," she whispered. "It's about to happen. Look!"

The sun rose in the north with a curious light, too quick, and the desert was green, and the multitude turned burnt black holes up to the sky. An Ahhhh rose up like a prayer they couldn't articulate.

Then the earth began to tremble and there was an instant when it fell away and, like dancers, they hovered in a little leap, and then the ground rose up again.

The uncanny false day came higher and they stood as if waiting to hear a voice. But the sound that came was like a ghostly locomotive whose rail was the air, the mountain, desert, sky. And a cloud rose up, bigger than the mountain, pink as a sunrise-sunset over the earth at the same instant.

She was kneeling in the sand, in the arms of the lunatic, who turned to the mountain with eyes that put her in mind of something. *The ocean.* His jaw hung down and he said, "Now." And she heard it, the suck of the sea receding, and she held on to his coat and looked up at his face.

He patted her back. "Come. Follow me."

She rose and stumbled after him where he led her by the

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hand. He'd turned his back on the mountain. He walked to face the silent mob where a whisper could have been heard, and he stopped before them, holding his arms stretched out.

"I am the resurrection and the light!" he shouted.

She dropped on the ground at his feet, afraid, trying to make herself small, and looked up at his quivering chin with its little fluttering beard.

"Take up thy cross and follow me!"

But in the east the faint day was returning. The sun rose dim and tiny, timid as a child barred from some obscene display, but daring to look, now it was over.

The madman shouted to the hesitating crowd, "I am the Alpha and the Omega. Repent! And wash in the blood of the lamb—"

A woman sniggered. And slowly they began to climb into their finned and chromium-plated automobiles. Out in the desert, tires skidded in turns, backed, braked, whipped up sprays of sand.

It was over. They were going. The exodus was slow, a cortege of cars going back to Las Vegas, east, into the timid sun.

The lunatic held out his arms, frozen there like the grizzly and the pony. And Jimmy shivered at his feet.

Then Burt and Julia Crow came from the Buffalo Ranch, Burt with his eyes streaming out a flood of tears. Stumbling, blind to the cars that swerved around them, he clung to Julia Crow, his face lifted as if he'd witnessed a private vision.

"He who follows me, though he die, yet will he live," shouted the lunatic.

Burt put up his head and listened, moving like a blind man in the direction of the voice. Jimmy held onto the man's coattail and tried to see into his face.

"I am the everlasting. If a seed fall into the earth and die, then and only then shall it live!"

"Did you see it? Did you see it?" Burt said, his voice ecstatic.

The man turned toward the pair. "Come," he said, sighing, taking Julia Crow by the hand. "Be my handmaiden. Follow me."

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Julia Crow hung back, giggling.

"Come," the man said again, and fickle Julia Crow, still giggling followed him toward the highway.

"No!" Burt shouted, trotting beside them, catching hold of Julia's shawl. Jimmy grasped the man's boney arm and set her heels in the sand.

"No," Burt shouted. "Look. Don't go!" He ran his sleeve under his nose and rubbed his fists in his eyes. "Stay here. There's going to be more of them. Stay!"

The man turned slowly, looked at Jimmy and Burt, then at the mountain. He shook his head. "I must be about my father's business," he said.

"We got *plenty* of business," Burt said. He had hold of Julia Crow's arm and was turning them back toward the Buffalo Ranch. The man surveyed the place with his sunken eyes.

Jimmy whispered, touching his arm, "Have a Coca Cola."

The man walked up to the buffalo pen. "It is the ark," he said, pausing to look at the sleeping animals. "It is the ark and we will make a covenant."

"Yeah," Burt said eagerly, clinging to Julia Crow. "We'll build us a covenant right over there for you, a real old-fashioned pioneer covenant with a pair of stuffed oxes to pull it and Indian arrows sticking in the canvas and I know where we can get us some wagon wheels."

"Two by two," the man said, taking Julia Crow's hand. "We will go into it two by two and await the subsiding of the waters and the return of the dove."

"We'll *get* some," Burt said.

And together they entered the building by way of the Zoo. The cayote blinked a sleepy eye at them and the rattler bruised his tongue against the glass, and the agate eyes of the bird looked over their heads.

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On Rising from the Dead

"Lift up in lilac-emerald breath the grail
Of earth again—
Thy face
From charred and riven stakes, O
Dionysus..."

Hart Crane

Saturday noon: the morning of the mind
Moves through a mist to breakfast: damp from sleep,
Rustic and rude, the partial self comes down
To face a frozen summer, self-imposed:
Then, as the numb shades lift, becomes aware
Of its other half, buried overhead,
A corpse in twisted sheets, a foggy portrait
Smudged in the bathroom mirror—elegies
Sung on the nerves of a pillow-muffled phone.

Nobody's home at home, the house announces.
And the head nods, nobody's home in here.
The bird of dawning silent all day long;
Nobody's home to nobody abroad:
As cars curve past the house, taking themselves
For airings, while the drivers doze within;
Anonymous dogs chivvy the ghosts of cats
Safely locked in the basement. Apples nod
Their hard green heads, lost in a blur of leaves.

Last night, in the hot house, the self sang
Its oneness, in reflection of a love.
Now the cold fragments rise, remembering;
As feudal lieges move for a missing King
Shattered on plains of sleep, they summon armies:
The midget fingers, elbows, eyes and toes,
To patch again the china egg. And horses,
Masculine cavalry of the will, prance, pull
The egg, in cobweb harness, up the hill.

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So the self trots upstairs, and reunites
With its lost half, by towelling off the mirror.
Reluctantly, the self confronts the self
Ripped, untimely, from its naked bed,
The winding sheets tossed down the laundry chute.
The room's aroma: whiskey and ripe fruit
Stale with fulfillment, while picked flowers curl
Their lips, like suicides in brackish water,
Soiled Ophelias, whom no breath can fulfill.

Still, air the rooms! though fruit and flowers cry,
"Leave light, leave air to buds. Beyond bloom,
Who cares?" Get thee to a compost heap.
Renew, the self prays to decay. Renew!
And buckles on its shell to meet the day,
Puts off the fantasy these rooms recall:
Of apple-chasing goddesses, a King
Raining his arrows in the laden trees
That weaponless, drop their pears in sticky grass;

Goes out-of-doors, to its own daylight domain
Where, pomegranate red, a mole on the lawn
Shrieks to the person from its several parts:
A Dionysus, dismembered by the cats
In a community of sharing: "Here! You keep
The head. I love a bloody leg!"
They must have sung in harmony, dragging limbs
About the yard; then left the god unburied,
The raw material of a ritual.

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Last night this purring priesthood was caressed
Before the cellar lock-up: smelling gamey,
The smoke from incense fires in their fur;
Dark-jawed from feasting, they had toyed with Kings'
Tossed organs, skinless as the summer moon!
So self and mole shared midnight, and the twain
Lay sundered on their fields. What rose again
To mend its wounds by fading Saturday?
A solar King, a subterranean mole?

Or both? Did severed parts personify
The prince of Darkness and the prince of Light?
Kicking, meanwhile, this body from the lawn,
Interring bits below the apple tree
Where the foot turns loose earth around the roots
And tamps it down. But nostrils of the cats
May raise the dead. So be it. What's a grave
But plunder, to a gardener? Or a priest
Rooting up bones of martyrs for display.

The other body takes itself to bed,
Buries itself in sheets as thin as soil,
Dreams of the elevation of the Host:
Mole in a silver chalice; kneels to sup
The blood of the dying, resurrected soul.
But there is leaping in the chancel aisle;
Stale altar flowers toss their heads, and burst
In an orgy of bloom: Communion Sunday,
With Dionysus, singing from the Cross!

—CAROLYN KIZER

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MINDORO, 1944

Above the dog-eye-colored land
And town of San José
Of hot dog-fur and tin,
Six boys have slung a coffin by the ropes,
And they and all of it are growing in-
ward, in the motion of the sun
Unbearably shimmering to uncoil.
Many have been killed, and they are lying down.
Light falls, man falls: together.
Sun rises from earth alone.

The bottled brightness of heat
Holds queerly a spade's scratched flame.
There is a log, a trembling barge
In air, and it is hard to hollow or to load.
Its wood-grain sews a sheet among their hands.
Each equal eye is in the mighty head
Of military gold. Behind their wheels
The trucks are lifting roads from where they lie.
Wheel falls, man falls: together.
Dust rises from earth alone.

In the balance walking breathless in their palms
He must not seem to move or be aware.
He leans, he feels he leans
Slowly from fist to fist again around.
He does not know how much or where
He swings, nor yet how much
Of him is stalled between, afloat inside
The muscles of their arms. He feels it shake.
He feels it pant, a pack of dogs, with life.
Beast falls, man falls: together.
Birth rises from earth alone.

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He strains to remember when.
May it be now he rises from this place
Like flame along the hair of burning string,
Inwinding, as he glows among his knots,
Six tall sway-headed forms? And this be his?
'Who, among you come, has not yet seen
Mutilation in full flight slain?'
He asks. Truthfully they are still.
Truth falls, man falls: together.
Thought rises from earth alone.

He is! He is outside!
He glitters sandily all about the spade!
He dances like dust in the pit
In all their good arms at once!
Blind as he is, as a ball of paper on fire,
He knows he must do nothing with the world!
Nothing! And see it blazing, there! He cries,
And laughs in it. He clings with their hands to the ropes.
His heart stops all around him, in the sun.
He picks up everything and loves.
Sun falls, man falls: together.
Light rises from earth alone.

—JAMES DICKEY

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NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

FICTION

William Styron *(The McCabes)*, editorial advisor to THE PARIS REVIEW, is the author of *Lie Down in Darkness* and *The Long March*, two novels which established him as one of the most significant writers of his generation.

Samuel Blazer *(The Fire-Eater)* was born in New York in 1934. He attended Tufts University and received a B.A. from the University of Chicago where he was also an editor of the *Chicago Review*. At present he is Associate Editor of *Gentleman's Quarterly*. His only previously published story appeared in *New World Writing, No. 11*.

Cecil Dawkins *(The Buffalo Ranch)* was born in Birmingham, Alabama in 1927 and is a graduate of the state University there. In 1952–53 she was the recipient of a Stanford University Writing Fellowship, after which she taught for five years at Stephens College, Mo.. Since then she has been living in Wisconsin and writing. One of her stories appeared last year in *Charm*.

INTERVIEW

Julian Mitchell is a young English writer now touring the United States on a Commonwealth Fellowship. A graduate of Oxford, his poems and stories have appeared in the *New Statesman*, the *London Magazine*, and other English periodicals.

Gene Andrewski is engaged in a wide variety of activities: the American production of *Valmouth*, the management of his own art gallery, and the assistant managing editorship of THE PARIS REVIEW. He has just returned from an extended trip abroad.

POETRY

Beth Singer Bently *(Honesty)* has published in the *New Yorker* and several American quarterlies. She lives in Seattle, Washington.

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Donald Peterson *(Triptych)*, whose work has appeared in the *Western Review* and elsewhere, was formerly in the Writers' Workshop at the State University of Iowa.

David Ferry *(Learning from History)*, Assistant Professor of English at Wellesley, has published his poems in THE PARIS REVIEW, the *Kenyon Review*, and *New Poems by American Poets, No. 2.*

Henri Coulette *(Evening in the Park)* has previously had his verse published in THE PARIS REVIEW, as well as in the *Hudson Review* and *New Poets of England and America.*

Robert Davis *(Times Square)*, an undergraduate at the University of Michigan, published his poem, *Daily*, in the last issue of THE PARIS REVIEW.

Harold Norse *(An Episode from Procopius)* lives in Italy. Alan Swallow published his first book of poems, *The Undersea Mountain.*

William Stafford *(Love the Butcher Bird Lurks Everywhere)* lives in Oswego, Oregon. His verse has frequently appeared in the *Hudson Review*, *Saturday Review* and elsewhere.

Theodore Holmes *(The People of Ilion)* published his first collection of poems in Scribner's, *Poets of Today IV*. His work has appeared previously in THE PARIS REVIEW.

Erroll Pritchard *(A Conundrum for the Bone Collector)* is Canadian, 21 years old and is attending the University of Washington.

Carolyn Kizer *(On Rising from the Dead)* has published poetry and criticism in *Poetry*, the *International Literary Annual* and *Prairie Schooner*.

James Dickey *(Mindoro, 1944)* is a former Sewanee Review Fellow whose poems have appeared in the major American Quarterlies. After some years of teaching, he is now working in an advertising firm in Georgia.

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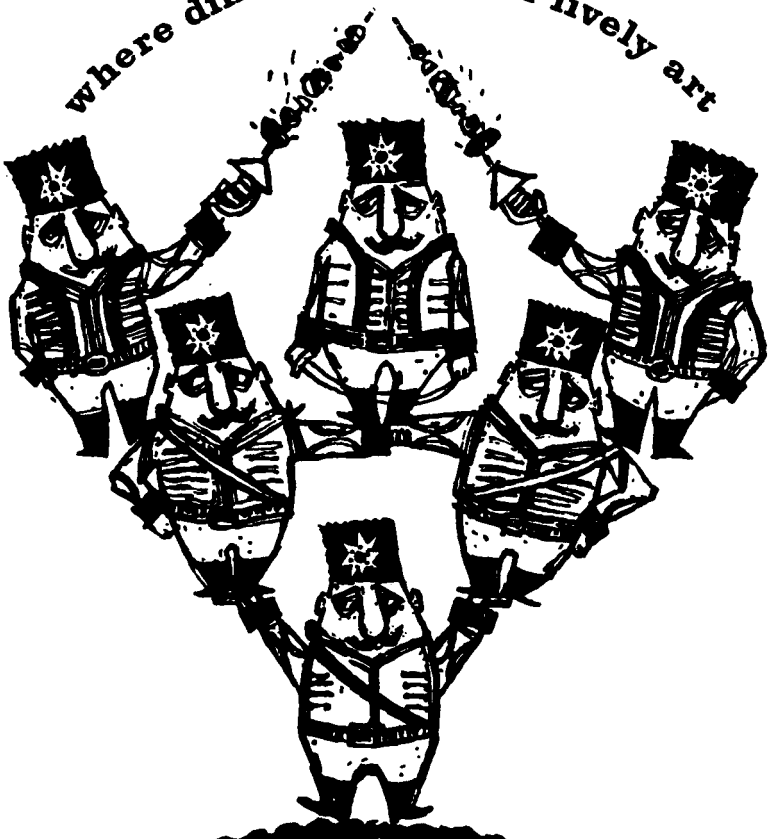

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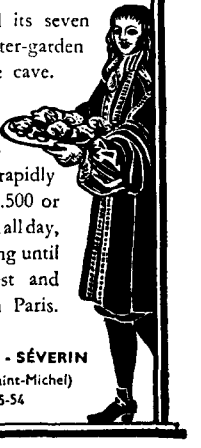

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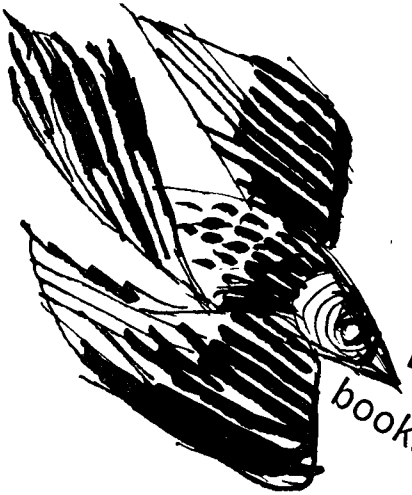

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